# LETTERS

To the AUTHOR of a

## FREE ENQUIRY

INTO THE

Nature and Origin of Evil.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

#### THREE DISCOURSES.

I. On CONSCIENCE.

II. On INSPIRATION.

III. On a PARADISIACAL STATE.

By the Rev. R. SHEPHERD, FELLOW OF C. C. C. OXFORD.

Εχοντες ουν την αιτιαν του κακου, λαμπρα Φωνη βοωμεν, οτι ο Θεος κακιας αναιτιος, διοτι το κακον η ψυχη ενεργει αυτεξουσιως, και ουκ ο Θεος; ει μεν γαρ βια το κακον επραττεν η ψυχη, ταχα αν τις τον Θεον ητιασατό τον αναιτιως αυτην συγχωρησαντα βιασθηναι, και τοι ουδε κακον ην το δια πραττομενου κατα δε πρωαιρεσιν αυτο αιρουμενη αυτη αν αιτια λεγοιτο δικαιως. SIMP. Comm. in Epict.

#### OXFORD,

Printed for W. FLEXNEY, in Holborne, London; and S. PARKER, in Oxford. 1768.

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## PREFACE.

lowing remarks on "A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil," when he first offered them to the public, apprehend the severity of the Enquirer's resentment. He presumed on the same right to appeal to the world for the propriety of his observations on that performance, that the Enquirer had to offer it to the public. And if such daring disent from his opinions arose, as is pretended\*, from sense-less misapprehensions, or malicious misconstructions; it were folly to put himself

<sup>\*</sup> See additional preface to the Free Enquiry, &c. page 2.

in a passion about a malignant critic, and cruelty to insult and abuse an ignorant one.

But with whatever degree of ignorance the following pages are chargeable, the author takes the opportunity this re-publication offers, of assuring the Enquirer, he had no malice in bis intentions: be read the FREE ENQUIRY without the least knowledge of the author, with a mind absolutely uninfluenced by prejudice or partiality. His was unbappily one of \* those middle-fized understandings to which the Enquirer meaned not to write: the doctrine of the original of evil, as revealed in scripture, appeared to him more consonant to reason, and more confistent with the attributes of God, than any other scheme human ingenuity had suggested, even the plausible solution urged by the Free Enquirer.

<sup>\*</sup> Free Enquiry preface, page 23.

Of such his dissent from the acute author of the Enquiry he ventured to produce his reasons; and to treat his Enquirer had thought sit to treat the authority of inspiration, the doctrines of redemption, satisfaction, &c. Irritated by such presumption, the Enquirer in a subsequent edition of his work, supports his former opinions by bold assertions and coarse words; stigmatises all such, as shall have the audacity to dissent from him, with the polite terms of senseless and malicious bigots \*.

Unawed by the severity of these restections, and unconvinced by such arguments as those, in further illustration and support of what was in that little tract advanced against the Free Enquiry, the author has in this re-publication annexed to it three

<sup>\*</sup> Free Enquiry preface, page 2, 30.

discourses; or, to adopt the Enquirer's elegant terseness of phrase, three ready-made
pulpit harangues: which, otherwise considered, no presumption of their merit would
have induced him to obtrude on the public.
They are published in the exact form in
which they were preached; and as they
were never intended for the press, it is
hoped the faults in stile and composition will
be candidly overlooked.

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## LETTERS.

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#### LETTER I.

SIR,

TN a late edition of those letters, which gave occasion to the following remarks; you feem to refent the objections that have been made to them by particulars, and the unfavourable reception they have met with from the public. You feem out of humour, because the wild whimsical conjectures and confident affertions, that may have been palmed with fuccess on a private circle of your admirers, have not passed current for arguments with the reasoning part of the world. You may have adopted a fystem, have been pleased with it; and from thence prejudiced in its favour: with a paternal eye nave -you

you may have overlooked all its defects; and personal esteem, or deference to your judgment, may incline partial friendship to do the fame. But if you appeal to the public, it requires not \* that fingular acquaintance with the imperfection of human nature, of which you feem to boaft yourfelf, to suppose the public will deal more freely with you. And when, piqued at the liberties they take in diffenting from you, you talk of the + senseless misapprebensions, and malicious misconconstructions with which your Free Enquiry hath been tortured: when you tell us, the united force of ignorance and malevolence, of faction, bigotry, and enthusiasm, have conspired against you; need you be informed that railing and abuse add no weight to a flimfy argument, nor will ever establish the truth of a fact, where the powers of reason fail?

Your preface confifts of a recapitulation of what is advanced in your letters; you

+ See preface, page 30.

<sup>\*</sup> See preface to the Free Enquiry, page 1. & 30.

have taken notice of some of the objections that have been made, but have given sew of these objections their sull weight; and have obviated none of them. Indeed it is much easier to pass over an objection in silence, than to silence it: a secret this of which you seem to be perfect master. Two or three points, however, there are; upon which, so closely are they connected with the subject, I must beg to be farther troublesome. On each I will touch briefly at present, thereby making way for a more sull discussion of them in the sequel.

The doctrine of a primæval state of innocence and happiness is no point, as some have been pleased to think, of mere speculation; it forms an essential article of christian saith: for if there never was any such state of persection, there could be no fall from it; and if there was no fall, there was no redemption. However it be; the truth of this notion you apprehend need not be decided here, because you have not made the least mention

mention \* of it. Give me leave to refer you to your first letter; where you tell us, this notion of a golden age, or paradifiacal state, is an amufing dream, as abfurd in philosophy, as in poetry delightful; and again, that thefe enchanting scenes could in fast never have existed, &c. Now to prove the probability, or even possibility, of such a state having existed, will greatly contribute to the demolition of that pretty fabric you have erected: fince if there ever was fuch a state, that is, if the nature of man will admit of fuch a state, what hinders but that fuch a ftate might have continued? whereas your theory proceeds upon a supposition that it is impossible that fuch a state should ever have existed, and entirely rests on this hypothesis.

In answer to this supposition of yours I observed that the notion of a primæval state of happiness and innocence was not peculiar to Christianity; but that it seemed to be a traditionary doctrine, common to all nations.

<sup>\*</sup> Preface, page 4.

Not to multiply quotations in proof of the truth of an observation, which whoever is the least conversant with the classics must readily allow; I instanced, as with an air of contempt you infinuate, a fingle passage from Ovid. To which you wittily reply, that Ovid forms no part of your creed. Suppose you and I had been disputing whether there ever was fuch a person as Moses; and knowing that to a gentleman of your liberal cast, a quotation from a prophane author would be much more convincing than fifty from what I call divine ones, I had obferved that Tacitus mentions him as the chief under whose conduct the Jews extricated themselves from the Ægyptian yoke: would you, with an affected air of scrupulous christrian zeal, tell me Tacitus formed no part of your creed?

In truth, however willing you may be to flur over this doctrine of a paradifiacal state; it is a matter of such real consequence, that the falsity of it is the basis of your system;

the reality of it the ground-work of my religious faith. I have therefore added to the following remarks a discourse on a paradisiacal state, in which I had endeavoured to prove, that the doctrine of a primæval state of innocence has not only the fanction of scripture, but was a received opinion among the Ægyptians, and adopted by the Greeks and Romans: and also that such a notion is most consistent with reason, most agreeable to the attributes of God, and to the nature of man. It is an opinion, in which for my own part I fo firmly believe; that though at least as sincere a Christian as yourself, I willingly let Ovid contribute his mite to form an article of my creed.

As to divine inspiration, you think it a very great doubt, "whether any one can possibly know when he himself is inspired:" and "that he should ever produce indubitable credentials of his divine commission to others who are uninspired, seems to you to be utterly impracticable; there being no marks by

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by which the fact can be ascertained, nor any faculties in the human mind, which are able to distinguish it. In answer to this is added a second discourse on inspiration: in which I observe it implies no contradiction, to suppose that God can instantaneously enlarge the faculties of the human mind, whenever he fees good; that fuch inftantaneous enlargement of the intellectual faculties may be very well supposed perceptible by the person himself on whom such effect is wrought, and that fuch perception is to himself sufficient conviction of his inspiration; and I have also endeavoured to shew, that certain criteria may be established, by which real inspiration will be fufficiently diftinguished from all false pretences to it.

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However, notwithstanding your denial of a primæval state of innocence, your doubt about the reality of inspiration, your absolute belief of the impracticability of communicating a knowledge of our own inspiration to others who are uninspired, you profess yourself

yourself a thorough sound christian, nay a Champion of Christianity; and declare that the Motive of your admired Performance was to shew the Excellence and Credibility of the Christian Religion. Such Assistance the Christian Religion wants not; and such paultry Efforts, to sap its Foundation, despites.

When you affirm, " it is impossible for Omnipotence itself to give a perfect Government, or a perfect Religion, to an imperfect Creature:" your affertion can only be fupported by a mere Quibble upon Terms. By a perfett Government or Religion, you mean absolute Perfection, a Government or Religion calculated for the first Order of created Beings: by an imperfest Creature, you mean comparative Imperfection, an Order of Beings in their Nature less perfect than those. But if by a perfect Government or Religion, you mean no more than fuch an one, as shall be most expedient for the purposes of that Set of Beings for whose Use they they were instituted; I see no reason why Perfection may not be ascribed both to the one and the other. Man for instance seems formed by Nature a fociable and religious Animal. If he be in his own Nature as perfect as other Creatures are, we must conclude; as his Nature required him to conduct himself according to Rules of Government and Laws of Religion, that those Rules of Polity prescribed by the benevolent Creator, and those Laws of Religion, were properly adapted to the Nature of his Being, and if exactly observed, calculated and fufficient to make him happy. In order to which he must of necessity be furnished by the same benevolent Author of his Existence with a perfect comprehension of these Laws, and an ability of conducting himself according to them. A principle deeply implanted in the human Mind, thus illuminating and energetic, we may apprehend Conscience originally to have been. This and Reason we may pronounce to have been

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been abundantly sufficient to direct mankind, both as to religion and polity, in the perfect paths of happiness and peace. Of this to explain my opinion more at large, I have annexed a discourse on the subject, and will therefore not trouble you with unnecessary repetitions here.

What is truth? on a certain occasion faid the scoffing Pilate. With an equal degree of farcasm you ask, "what was that faith, which the author of the christian religion indifpenfably required in all his disciples?" It will perhaps be a fufficient answer to your question, to inform you what it was not. It was not then a bare belief in the being of a God, for this will not distinguish the christian from a reasoning heathen. It was not a belief that the fole end and aim of Christ's divine mission was, to leave us precepts and an example to walk by; for that puts Christ upon no better foot than a Socrates, a Plato, an Epictetus, or Theognis. Nay fuch a faith supposes him a less amiable person, a much nood

much inferior character to any of these, in that it represents him as an impostor; for he tells us by his apostles, that he came to take away the sins of the world by giving his life a ransom for many.—That, as in Adam all died, even so in Christ should all be made alive. To these many passages might be added, that plainly mark out Christ's satisfaction, and the redemption of mankind.

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You inform us however, the satisfaction of Christ means no more than this; that he by his excellent precepts communicated much happiness to mankind; and, as according to your hypothesis Omnipotence cannot impart to mankind a grain of happiness without a proportionate quantity of misery, that in consequence of this happiness he in his own death and sufferings took upon him the portion of misery that must necessarily attend it. If I ask you, why happiness and misery are in such proportions weighed out as it were by drachms and ounces; that

God cannot communicate an ounce of happiness, without charging his favour with half an ounce of misery: you have your answer ready; you fancy that it is so. Hence the doctrine of vicarious punishment, sacrisices, &c. and hence the key to the Origin of Evil.

Before I conclude this letter, I must beg leave to detain you one minute longer on the doctrine of vicarious punishment; which you observe is upon any other plan than your own, of all religious tenets the most absurd, though the most universal. "\* Pagans, Jews, and Christians have agreed in this one point, though differing in all others; and have all treated it as a self-evident principle, that the sins of one creature might be attoned for by the sufferings of another: but from whence they have derived this strange opinion, none of them have pretended to give any account." And are you really ignorant

<sup>\*</sup> Nature and Origin of Evil, p. 148.

of any reason being assigned for a practice so universally conformed to? If so, you must permit me to refer you to some of those systematical divines, whom you seem to treat with such an air of contempt; for either your ignorance in this point is affected, or you have never read those systems you pretend to censure and despise. This conformity confessedly so universal, to a practice so extravagant, can have no foundation in nature \*; yet must have some cause: which though you profess yourself unable to assign, the whole christian ceconomy is an explanation of it.

Though the scriptures are silent as to the institution of sacrifices, yet we find from the

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<sup>\*</sup> Tum vero instituta quædam, ita hominibus communia, ut non tam naturæ instinctui, aut evidenti rationis collectioni, quam perpetuæ & vix paucis in locis per malitiam aut calamitatem interruptæ traditioni, accepta referri debeant: qualis victimarum in sacris mactatio, &c. Grot. de Ver.

the oblations of Cain and Abel, it must have been in the days of Adam: established, as it is reasonable to suppose, by divine revelation, and the observance of it enjoined by a positive command of God. And very great stress was undoubtedly laid upon it, or a practice fo little to be accounted for on principles of reason could never have been by after ages fo univerfally received. The scriptural explication of this matter, to comprise it in as brief terms as possible, proceeds thus. Vice is of fuch a nature, that an infinitely pure God must abhor it; what he hates infinite justice obliges him to punish: yet mercy and goodness, attributes as inseparable from our ideas of the Deity as either of the other, incline him to will, that all mankind should he saved. His wisdom discovers an expedient, which shall reconcile to each other his justice and mercy; and place finful man's corrupted race in a capability of happiness. A divine person devotes himself as an expiatory facrifice, oblation,

lation, and fatisfaction for the fins of the whole world: by whose stripes we are healed.

Now what could be more efficacious in keeping alive in the mind of man the just sense he ought to entertain of the heinous nature of sin; or what more proper to prepare him for this general expiatory sacrifice, that was promised ever since the first commission of sin, and was to be made when the sulness of time should come: in short, what more consistent with infinite wisdom, than this institution of sacrifices? It was a monition both of the goodness of God to mankind, in indulging them with such an expiation; and also of the punishment in strict justice due to sin, that required so great an atonement.

This perhaps you will with your usual humour stile a ready-made pulpit harangue. I know not, that is the worse on that account; and sure I am, that come from whencesoever it may, it will in the scale of unprejudiced

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reason weigh much heavier than those dark, unaccountable, unintelligible notions of the necessity of partial misery in order to the production of general happiness, which you have substituted in its place.

I am, Sir, &c.

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## LETTER II.

SIR,

THE farther we proceed in the investigation of that very abstruse subject, the Nature and Origin of Evil; difficulties do fo rife on difficulties, that one cannot be furprised at the many various and whimsical hypotheses, which have been framed for the folution of fo intricate a point. It is much easier to detect the errors of another man's hypothesis; than, in framing one, to steer clear of errors ourselves: Nor is it strange, that relying folely on the powers of unaffifted reason, in an enquiry seemingly above its reach, those in general, who have much confidered the point, should remain disfatisfied with every determination except their own. Hence what numerous schemes hath human reason devised to solve this gordian knot! while B 4

while every one hath been rejected in its turn, and error constantly succeeded error. For my own part, I cannot but esteem the solution of it, the scriptures afford us, fairly and impartially considered, to stand clearer of objections, and less embarrassed with difficulties, than any other I have yet had the happiness to light on.

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Unfatisfied however with the opinion concerning the Origin of Evil, formed from thence, you suppose it owing solely to the necessity of human nature: That is, that evil was so intimately interwoven in the frame and constitution of man, that he neither was, nor ever could be, absolutely and entirely free from it \*. In order to make

<sup>\*</sup> Much the same solution of this important question, "Whence is Evil," I find infinuated in a publication entitled, 'the Morals of the Antients and Moderns compared.' It is absurd, says Mr. England, the author of that treatise, to expect a perfect practice from imperfect creatures, &c. &c. In a certain catechism, which is sometimes tacked to the above publication,

way for this supposition, the first grand obfacle to be removed is, the notion of a primæval state of innocence: which is founded on tradition, hiftory, and, as many have been induced to think, on reason too. For does it not favour of abfurdity, is it not irreconcileable with the notions we have of spirit and matter, to suppose that an omnipotent, all-wise, all-just God should endow a Being with the faculty of reason; yet subject that divine particle to the arbitrary power and wildness of the passions: Is not that plainly to subject the superior part in human nature to the inferior? For in this degree stands man in the chain of nature; a compound Being participating of the different

cation, the reader meets with the following question and answer.

Quest. Whence ariseth sin?

Answ. Sin ariseth from the necessary impersection of our finite nature.

This, I think, is literally the folution infifted on by the Free Enquirer: With what strength of reasoning he supports the affertion, the following pages will evince. natures of spirit and matter; and thus fills up the vast gap that would otherwise exist between angels and brutes.

Is it not most contrary then to reason, to fuppose such a being endued with a knowledge of good and evil; convinced of what is right by the highest of his faculties, yet necessarily determined to what is wrong, and acting under the influence of the meanest of them? But let us confider reason, and it is certainly more agreeable to the wisdom of God, as well as the dignity of man, that we should so consider it, as given him to controul his passions, and regulate his desires; and we shall then discern a true and noble end in this high prerogative which his benevolent Creator hath vested in him. If it was not affigned him for this use, it is impossible to find out for what purpose it was conferred on him, unless to afford him a deeper sense of the unavoidable evil that is fet before him: and man, the lord of the creation,

creation, will in this point of view appear to be the riddle of it. If it was affigned him for this purpose and intent; both the wisdom and goodness of the Deity are concerned in its fufficiency to answer the end designed, viz. the government of our passions. From whence it will appear, that fin or moral evil, is nothing else than an inordinate fally of the passions, owing folely to the want of a proper exertion of reason; and is a perversion of that fubordination which God established between reason and the passions. And hence too it follows, that some space of time must have intervened between the first establishment of that order and harmony, which fubfifted in every part of the creation, when God faw that all was good,' and the perversion of it.

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Yet this notion of a Paradifiacal state, or age of innocence, you affirm to be "an amu"fing dream, and as absurd in philosophy

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" as in poetry delightful \*;" which is an affirmation without proof, and by confequence fufficiently answered by a denial. But " fuch a state of perfection +, you " think, might be proved impossible, both " from the nature of this terrestrial globe, " and the nature of its inhabitants." The misfortune is, your conjectures, however ingenious, will never pass for arguments: nor, till you had shewed the imposfibility of a doctrine, which had history and tradition in its favour, had you any right to reject it for a fanciful supposition of your own. And to prove a perfect state of innocence merely possible, is a full confutation of the opinion advanced in its stead. But granting us our Paradifiacal state, you think the short duration \* of this perfection, is as inconsistent with infinite power, wisdom and goodness, as though such state of perfection

<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 42. † Ibid.

had never existed. To which let me reply, that however scrupulously you may acquiesce in the most literal \* interpretation of the Mosaic history of the creation, when you think it will serve your purpose, all your skill in divinity will not enable you to tell me how short that period was.

"The Stoics, you observe, seem to have had some dark and unintelligible notions of this inherent imperfection in the nature of all created beings †." Dark and unintelligible as their notions may appear; they approach much nearer the truth, than the doctrines of any other of those ancient sages, who took upon them to instruct the heathen world in the precepts of religion and morality: a strong proof this of the necessity of a revelation to set us right in these important subjects.

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 52. † Ibid. p. 50. Indeed,

Indeed, fo strongly do our passions plead with us for gratification, so prevalent is the influence of vice in our corrupt nature, derived from custom and example; that it is no wonder, if to those, who took their notions chiesly from what they felt pass within themselves, and had only the faint glimmerings of reason to direct them in their enquiries, moral evil should appear, as confirmed and inveterate habits usually do, to spring from the very constitution of human nature.

But there is a well-known tenet of the Stoics, which plainly shews, that their notions of human nature were, in fact, very different from those, which suppose an innate impersection in it. They accounted nothing a real evil, but the evil of sin\*:

<sup>\*</sup> Nihil est malum; nisi quod turpe atque vitiosum est. Crc. Tusc. Disp.

and this they supposed no necessary inherent fault in human nature; as appears clear in that they acknowledge a state of perfect hap. piness attainable. The perfectly wise man. fay they, is perfectly virtuous; and being perfectly virtuous, he is necessarily free from all real evil, and confequently perfectly happy. Here then we find a fect of philosophers afferting the reality of a state of perfection on the principles of reason; which, wild and extravagant as fuch tenets are, with respect to our present depraved condition, and the perverted order of things, feems ftrongly to con firm the truth of fuch a state having existed: unless their notions are absolutely and entirely without any foundation at all.

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Having premifed these few observations in regard to the possibility of a state of innocence, the more closely to confine myself to the point in question, and your own train of reasoning upon it, I will observe the plan

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laid down, and prepare step by step to follow you through the gloomy ranks of evil. One class of which are acknowledged to be no evils at all; another we shall find to be evils of our own contracting; and all the rest, their vitiated progeny.

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HE consideration of Evils of Imper-• fection, is the object of your second letter; which I am glad to find struck out of the black catalogue. For though writers on this subject have in the class of evils entered those of imperfection; properly speaking, there is no fuch thing as imperfection in any created Being whatever; or, if you will call the limitation of natural powers, affigned to the different species of Beings, by so harsh a name; such imperfection is no evil. A man may, if he please, call an ass foolish, a sheep weak, and a toad ugly; but he cannot without great impropriety call any of them imperfect: each being created with powers, best calculated to promote its own happiness, and to supply its wants. Why then

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then will you acknowledge perfection in the whole, yet think it abfurdity to suppose it in all its parts \*? If you mean absolute perfection; your meaning is, that an ass, a sheep, or a toad has not the perfections of the Deity: A point I am not inclined to dispute with you. But if your term imply no more than relative perfection, which, when we speak of any rank of created beings, is all the perfection usually contended for; I deny the absurdity of the supposition, and humbly presume there is discernible in each species the same perfection you acknowledge in the Great Whole.

There are real evils enough discernible in human nature, without torturing our invention in quest of imaginary ones. If we content ourselves with a rational enquiry into those only which are properly our own, and to the introduction of which we ourselves are

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unquestionably accessary; we shall find every other evil, that can be called really such, by fome fecret connection refulting from them, depending on them, and gradually increasing with them. And if, in this depraved state of things, we could reform from fuch evils as are evidently of our own contracting; all others, however feemingly innate, would necessarily vanish: and we should find ourselves to be, without any alteration in our nature, that happy, perfect creature, which tradition reports us, hiftory represents us, and in those Aruggles that a virtuous man has with his paffions, ever labouring after a height and degree of virtue, which yet he feels and acknowledges himself unable to attain to, reafon feems to confirm us to have been.

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On the whole, Sir, in this your letter on the evils of imperfection, there appears little, that might not without any detriment to your subject have been omitted; no great matter to except against, and nothing to ap-

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prove; unless a pretty differtation on the wisdom and goodness of providence. Which, give me leave to tell you, ferves abundantly to convince me, that those ready-made arguments, with which middle-fized understandings are well fitted from every pulpit, however contemptuously you may affect to treat them, are frequently made much use of by the \* learned, impartial, sagacious, and inquisitive, such as yourfelf; and fuch, as to use your own words, you alone apply to. Set off with a little florid colouring, they have given life and vigour to many a flimfy performance, that had little else to recommend it, besides an affectation of fingularity, and a specious air of thinking freely. become for him if I unable

I have the honour to be, Sir, &c.

manifest van deodaw roe Westerland

<sup>\*</sup> Preface to the Free Enquiry, p. 23.

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## LETTER IV.

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AR as we have hitherto proceeded in our Enquiry, no interruption have we met with from real evils: it having been proved, that nothing imperfect could come out of the hands of an all-wife, all-mighty Creator; or, if a limitation of the powers of any species of created Beings can be called imperfection, that fuch imperfection is no The subject of your next letter is natural evil; and the grand question you there propose to solve is, "Why God, whose " only motive in creating Beings must be " the production of happiness, should yet " condemn them, by an absolute necessity " of nature, to innumerable and unavoid-" able miseries \*?" Your solution of which

\* Origin of Evil, p. 76, 77.

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difficulty is this: " these evils could not " have been prevented, without the loss of " greater good \*." But the question presupposes a fact that is absolutely salse; since those evils can never be derived from a necessity of nature, from which some men are wholly exempt: and you attempt to folve a feeming difficulty, by substituting a real one in its room. For, when it is afferted, that pains of body, inquietudes of mind, and the like evils, must fall on some, in order to promote the happiness of others: will not the objector immediately ask, How, and in what manner, the fufferings of one man can, in a physical sense, be supposed to conduce to the happiness of another? Here you have raifed a real difficulty, of which I find not that you have offered any folution at all. So far from it, you acknowledge it inconceiveable how they operate; and even, that they do so operate, to be only a mere

difficulty

<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 78.

probability. But why should a man step out of the common road to attack a religion, the doctrines of which, if sometimes above the reach of reason, have never been proved to be in contradiction with it; whose moral part forms a purer system of ethics, than human wisdom ever devised; and which, considered merely as the religion of your country, demands some regard: —Why rudely labour to subvert the established doctrines of such a religion, only to substitute in their room bare probabilities, and your own inconceiveable notions?

But if we do not content ourselves with a partial view of things, nor take up with bare matters of fact without endeavouring to acquaint ourselves with the meaning of them; we shall find, that natural evils are no other than the evils, God has annexed as natural consequences of our vices: A truth this,

<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 96.

prettily allegorised by the heathen poets, in the Fable of Pandora; who is seigned by an act of disobedience to have introduced into the world all manner of evil.

proved to be in contradiction with its whele

—γυνη χείρεσσι πιθου μεγα πωμ' αφελουσα
Εσκεδασ', ανθρωποισι δ' εμησατο κηδεα λυγρα.
Αιψα γας εν κακοτητι βροτοι καταγηρασκουσι.
ΗΕΝ. περι εργ: ημ:

The fatal charge the curious fair unlocks;
Straight issuing from the interdicted box
Of ills a num'rous train with harsh alloy
Embitter life, and marr each former joy, &c.

VOUR COURTER, CIC TOUT 13

Those evils the author has comprehended under the following heads: Poverty, Labour, Inquietudes of Mind, Pains of Body, and Death. Whether they be really deducible from an absolute necessity of nature, or the cause we have ventured to assign, will be further seen by a distinct and impartial review of them.

With fo little propriety can poverty be esteemed an evil of nature; that at the beginning of the creation it was absolutely impossible that poverty should exist. For, as nature is content with little, our wants were originally few: and it was in every man's power to gratify his defires, and provide himself with a sufficient supply of whatever he judged necessary and conducive to the comforts and conveniencies of life. This may fairly be supposed, without having recourse to a supposition, which is no absurd one, and would fet the matter in a much clearer light; that the earth spontaneously produced her fruits, " the herb yielding " feed, and the tree yielding fruit after " its kind." a se who son blow served to

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real good. Man is been to labeled that

Nec signare quidem, aut partiri limite campum
Fas erat: in medium quærebant: ipsaque tellus
Omnia liberius, nullo poscente, ferebat. VIRG.

It was ambition and avarice on the one hand, and diffipation and indolence on the other, that produced poverty: and if there ever was a time when these moral evils did not subsist; there was a time when the cry of poverty was not heard.

nower to gratify his defires, and provide The consequence of poverty is labour; and therefore primarily deducible from the fame caufe. By which term is understood the drudgery and toils, which one part of mankind undergoes to support the other in affluence and eafe. For the labour, which it might be necessary for each individual to fustain, in order to provide himself with the comforts and conveniencies of life in a ffate of nature, would not only be no evil, but a Man is born to labour; and as real good. our benevolent Creator has made it necessary to our subsistence, so also has he made it conducive to the health and vigour both of body and mind: and has likewise annexed to it a proper degree of pleasure and satisfaction.

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faction. Some of the greatest geniuses of the heathen world, as history informs us, such too as have been most eminent for virtue, and who therein approached the nearest to man's original perfection, have amused themfelves with the plough, the pruning-hook, and other rural employments. And if in the most obscure retreat these interposing labours, feconding the pleasing interesting contemplations of the mind; if this harmonious concord of the intellectual and bodily faculties thus mutually aiding and relieving each other, cannot afford us a more substantial happiness than any other pleafures in life, however eagerly hunted after; it is because of those wretched refinements, which fin, or moral evil, has effected in human nature. Onice wild hove in a semiserrot

The inquietudes of the mind must be acknowledged real, and perhaps the greatest evils, to which human nature is liable. These, if we trace them to their true source,

cious extremes. We cannot forbear being

But all inquietudes of mind are not to be contracted within fo narrow a compass. While we have passions, and so much moral evil abounds in the world, these passions will sometimes unavoidably launch out into vicious extremes. We cannot forbear being

liceling cosh coince cannot affect us

<sup>\*</sup> It is a maxim laid down by the moralists: that, to doubt the rectitude of an action, is a proof that it is not absolutely and strictly right: and therefore a sufficient reason for declining it.

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troubled at the undutifulness of children, the ingratitude of those whom we have obliged, the infincerity of friends, and the infamous aspersions of slander and malevolence. The Stoical apathy is absolutely unattainable; and these disquieting affections of the mind may be so far termed natural, as they work so forcibly and universally, that the most cool and dispassionate cannot be wholly insensible of them. Yet, who sees not that they originally proceed from moral evils? Since, if there was no such thing as ingratitude, slander, &c. the mind could suffer uneasiness on none of these accounts.

Pains of body are evils more clearly and demonstratively deducible from vice, than any of the former. They are certain consequences of indolence, luxury, and intemperance: often derived from our own excesses; and often from those of our ancestors. Disease rolls in the chariot, and lolls upon the bed of down: our soops and delicate viands

viands are full of these ills; they sparkle in the intoxicating glass, and unnerve in the embrace of harlots. If any one doubts whether human nature could ever be absolutely free from that train of diseases, which at present seem to reign almost universally; let him visit the peasant's cortage, and he will there find many instances of persons, who have arrived at the verge of life, without ever experiencing the rackings of sickness and disease; which amounts to a full proof that these evils are not inherent in human nature, but are the wretched progeny of human vices.

Let us then represent to ourselves one of these happy rustics, who has almost finished his course of life, with a conscience ever void of offence, and a body free from aches and sickness. Suppose him passed through all the various scenes that chequer human life, and heartily tired with the dull irksome repetition of a continual sameness, as may very easily be in

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the case; since perhaps a principal source of the pleasures of life is novelty: and may be not meet the embraces of death with as much complacency and satisfaction, and perhaps too with as little pain, as he would sink into the arms of its near relation, sleep \*? To such an one can death be properly styled an evil? Or, does it not rather deserve the first place in the fair train of blessings †: as it not only delivers him from the tediousness of such thoughts as serve but to mortify him with the recollection of those pleasures, which he must never again enjoy; but, now that every short lived gratification palls and

## \* Confanguineus leti fapor. Verd. on od blitton

Of this opinion is the wild philosopher Rousseau : such persons, he thinks, as have by strength of constitution and a temperate life, lived free from sickness and disease—ils s' eteignent ensin, sans qu' on s' apperçoive, qu' ils cessent d' etre, & presque sans s' en apperce-voir eux-memes.

Rousseau sur Fundemens de L' Inegalite, &c.

† Ut doceam, non modo non malum esse, sed bonum etiam esse, mortem. Crc.

fickens

fickens upon him, opens to his view new fcenes of untasted happiness?

nog more the embraces of death with so much Let death then be discharged from the gloomy company of evils, into which you have without cause introduced him; and all the rest are clearly owing not to the original imperfection of human nature, but the dreadful breaches that fin hath made in it. For, as to those accidental hurts, to which the body is liable, nor ever could be exempt from, fuch as the fracture of a bone, the diflocation of a joint, &c. they belong not to the class of evils here treated of, but are to be ranked under those of imperfection. And it would be no less absurd to arraign the goodness of God for not making us of adamant and steel, than for suffering our frame to be liable to fuch harms as thefe.

Which then of all the various evils that man labours under, and are called natural, can be justly and properly imputed to the fault of his nature; from which of all the numerous train is it impossible he could ever have been free; or from whence can they be so rationally deduced, as from that grand source to which they have been traced back, from moral evil? That soul sountain from whence issue all the streams of evil, that slow through the vale of mortal life, and taint the happiness for which man was originally designed, is the next subject of Enquiry.

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But before we proceed to that point, I shall, with all deference to your superior judgment, hazard my sentiments of a fact, of which you seem not thoroughly to have entered into the meaning. Speaking of the analogy between pleasure and pain, you observe, that "\* many in Christian countries have been sainted for long fasting, for whipping and tormenting themselves, for sitting whole years in uneasy postures, &c. And that

\* Origin of Evil, p. 93.

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" many

" many at this day in the East are almost " deified for loading themselves with heavy " chains, bending under burthens, and the " like." From whence you suppose, that where thefe cuftoms prevailed, the people had some dark notions of the merit of sufferings abstracted from their tendency to any visible good: which notions, you apprehend, must be founded on the necessity of pain to produce happiness. But the true reafon of these practices appears easy to be ascertained, without having recourse to notions merely chimerical; and which, were they ever fo true, can never be proved to be fo. The fear of eternal misery, because distant, will on many minds operate less forcibly in deterring men from fin, than the dread of a fevere punishment being inflicted upon the immediate commission of it: and even where that is not the case, this motive will always co-operate with, and enforce the other. And on this principle were inftituted those corporal punishments, which are still practifed by the Y

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the Papists; sometimes enjoined them by their confessors, and sometimes their own voluntary act: neither are they confidered in this view fo absolutely devoid of reason, as they have been generally represented. And as to those who walk barefoot, crouch under burthens, or load themselves with chains; it is well known, that this variety of severe discipline is undergone chiefly in order to move pity and compassion in the beholders: and so good an effect has it, that fuch objects feldom fail of a plentiful alms. Another argument, which may perhaps plead the cause of these zealots more powerfully than pity, is a general perfuasion, that the alms so disposed of will be applied to some good and pious use, as the founding of a mosque, an hospital, or the like: and, indeed, fuch their intention is fometimes specified by the supplicants on labels, which they carry about them. Accordingly with the gains thus acquired, which is often very confiderable, the devotee builds or endows a convent, or a mosque.

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And hence it is, that the highest honours are sometimes paid to them, as to common benefactors. For I will venture to affirm, that history cannot produce one single instance in any age or nation, of the highest honours being decreed to persons, who have voluntarily exposed themselves to sufferings, abstracted from their tendency to some visible good.

The farther I read, the more clearly am I convinced of the power and liveliness of your imagination, and that conjecture is indisputably your fort: while you are merely conjectural, you are entertaining; but when you pretend to reason and explain, you are out of your sphere, and very unsatisfactory.

I am, Sir, &c.

## LETTER V.

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WE are now come to the grand point in question; whether man came out of the hands of his Creator, what he at present appears, and feels and acknowledges himself to be: so impotent of reason, such a dupe to passion, with a will so prone to evil, in a word, the impersect thing he is.

Perhaps the knowledge of no one speculative truth is so natural and universal, as the knowledge of good and evil; nothing is so easy to be ascertained, as when an action is really good, and when really evil. Yet scarce any thing seems to have perplexed moral writers more, than fully and properly to define them; as appears from the variety of definitions that are given of them, and D 3 which

which are almost as numerous as the authors who have treated on the subject. Must it not feem strange then, that though the difcernment of moral good and evil be as natural to the mind, as the perception of light and darkness is to the eye; an immutable, univerfal principle, in which every man is felf-taught, yet no one has been able by any fatisfactory criterion to determine what it is, and wherein it consists. Let the most rude and uncivilized man hear of a virtuous action, and he will naturally be pleafed with it; and an evil action will proportionably difgust him. Ask him why he dislikes the one, and admires the other; and I am of opinion he would find it a very difficult matter to give a tolerable reason. Paradoxical as this may appear, there are facts in the natural world, fuch as are the immediate objects of our senses, that operate no less unaccountably. Who, for inftance, has told us what beauty is, deduced it to a general definition, or fixed the true standard of it? Yet

Yet on fight of a really beautiful object, tastes however different concur in admiring it: and by a kind of instinctive knowledge, we perceive and confess the reality of beauty, in that we are charmed with the influence of it. From this diversity of sentiments therefore concerning the criterion of virtue, no argument can be brought against the reality of it: and if all the definitions we can form of it be imperfect, this can only be ascribed to the narrowness of our ideas.

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The definition you propose, confines virtue to a tendency to promote general good \*, and is therefore objectible to, as being too limited. To contribute to the general happiness is certainly a branch of virtue, and a principal one too: but then this is only referable to our conduct in respect of others; and moral virtue may exist independent of it. Fortitude and resolution in bearing the mi-

\* Origin of Evil, p. 112.

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feries

feries of life, is as unquestionably a virtue, as justice, benevolence, or any other moral duty whatever: but this relates wholly to a man's felf, and is naturally no more productive of public good than evil; and which ever is consequential of it, is merely accidental. Hence then it appears that this criterion of your's, though not false, is defective. It is true, that whatever contributes to the general blifs, is virtuous: but it is as true, that actions may be denominated virtuous, without having any natural tendency to public utility. There are duties that we owe to God and ourselves, such as with respect to others may be stiled indifferent, the observance of which is nevertheless morally good, and for a difregard and neglect of them we are justly chargeable with vice. Perhaps an instance may contribute to place this matter in a clearer light. Let us suppose that Cæfar was affaffinated by his fon; and, that by his death mankind was delivered from an oppressor, and the Roman common-wealth restored

restored to liberty. If, according to your criterion, moral good is to be estimated by its tendency to general utility, this action of Brutus is absolutely good: yet parricide, according to all notions of right and wrong whatever, is absolutely evil; but that an action should be absolutely good, and absolutely evil at the same time, is a slat contradiction in terms.

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The truth is, an action, before it can be denominated virtuous, must, besides contributing to the general good, have respect to him who does it, and his duty to himself; and also to the commands and prohibitions of him who has afforded us a rule of action, unless reason and conscience were afforded us invain. And whenever an action appears good with respect to these three relations, it may then be pronounced strictly and in the highest degree virtuous. Virtues there are, or rather branches of virtue, which regard each of these relations separately, without interfering with

with either of the others: But when an action, however conformable to one of these relations, however productive of public good, clashes with either, or, as may be, with both the other; that action can with as little propriety be stiled a virtuous action, as the man, who by irreverence, or neglect dishonours his Creator, or by debauchery and voluptuousness debilitates his body, and stupifies his mind, can be called virtuous; because he pays his just debts, and makes his money circulate. Indeed we are told, all that you mean is; that whatever produces good in general is virtue, and that whatever in general produces evil is vice: and this rule is to be \* applied to the general species of actions, and not to particular actions. To which it is replied, that a definition of virtue, which does not extend to every case is defective. Whatever produces happiness, must always and in all cases be virtue; else that definition of it is

<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 113.

an imperfect one. For virtue is and must be ever and invariably the same.

thele effects offic, which the m Not to rob then the noblest principle, that animates the human mind, of more than half its praise, by confining it to a tendency to promote a little temporary good, which is not to be confined to the limits of this globe; nor yet to render it more unintelligible by fubltituting words instead of meaning, such as we cannot perfectly understand ourselves, and are therefore not likely to explain to others: let us content ourselves with knowing that virtue confifts in an absolute implicit obedience to the divine will; in the obfervance of an universal law, a rule of conduct stamped upon the mind of man from the beginning by his all-wife Creator. This was the law which was originally afforded Adam whereby to regulate his actions: who was formed perfect according to the rank of human nature, with a healthful body, a clear and discerning mind. And how forcibly it must

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must act in the perfect state of human nature, may be in some measure conceived from those effects of it, which the mind, depraved and corrupted as it is, still strongly experiences in the alarming dictates of conscience \*. This was the law, which by vice and prejudice became in a course of ages so wretchedly perverted and obscured, that Moses was sent to revive, explain, and enforce it: and which Christ came down from Heaven to perfect and sulfill.

Where then shall we expect to find this almost obliterated principle? Not in the vague guesses of the fanciful speculatist; nor yet in the doubtful disquisitions of sophistry and metaphysicks; nor indeed any where but in that universal law which has been graciously dispensed to us, to supply its place.

<sup>\*</sup> See Discourse on Conscience.

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To consider then this principle of virtue. implanted in the human mind from the beginning, and by extraordinary interpolitions of providence at fuccessive periods enforced; the practice of it enjoined us with a view to our happiness, and in so eminent a manner conducing to our good here, and our exaltation in the next state; it seems a paradox, as you observe, to see mankind in their general conduct continually counteracting the gracious designs of their Maker. The usual folution of this difficulty is affirmed to be " false in all its principles \*." That is, man neither came perfect out of the hands of his Creator, nor endued with a freedom of will and action; nor if God had created him both perfect and free, would that in the least have justified the introduction of wickedness and misery. We will examine the truth of these positions separately. But first I must take the liberty to observe, that

<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 126.

in acknowledging, as you do \*, an original depravity in human nature; you are making a concession, of which I apprehend you are not aware. For depravity, if I understand the import of the word, means a marring, spoiling, or corruption, not barely the imperfection of human nature. By such concession you admit the very thing, against which you are levelling your whole artillery of shrewdness and learning.

Man's original perfection, you observe, is a false notion, derived from the philo-is a false notion, derived from the philo-is sometimes of the first ages, founded on their ignorance of the Origin of Evil, and ina-is bility to account for it on any other hypo-is thesis †." Which is, in other words, they supposed such a state, because such an hypothesis appeared to them the most rational and probable: an observation, which I am sure does not prove it to be a false notion.

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 125. † Ibid. p. 127.

To this bare affertion of yours stands opposed the authority of one of the greatest geniuses and soundest philosophers of all antiquity, who with regard to this matter is remarkably express. "This account of the
"happy age, says he, has been handed
"down from the most ancient times; and
"our ancestors who lived nearest to the first
"revolution of the world were witnesses
"and unexceptionable afferters of the truth
"of it \*."

But your grand objection to the probability of man's original perfection is, that it would be the alteration of his nature; and that, as foon as he became perfect, he must cease to be a man. In order to determine the force of this objection, it is necessary to enquire what is the true nature of man. Is

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Απεμνημονευετο δε υπο των ημετερων προγονων των πρωτων, οι τελυτωση μεν τη προτερα περιφορα τον εξης χρονου
εγειτονουν, της δε κατ αρχας εφυοντο. τουτων γαρ ουτοι κηρυκες εγενονθ' ημιν των λογων. PLATO Πολιτ:

he not a being partly fensitive, and partly rational? If so; the right notion of human nature is either this, "a rational principle, "conducting and governing the passions:" or else it is this, "a rational principle, depressed by and subject to the tyranny of inordinate passions." If this be the right notion of human nature; the gift of reason can serve no other purpose than that of rendering us miserable. But all the general dispensations of an infinitely good God must tend to promote good and happiness.

That is the great center to which every general dispensation of providence tends like a ray from the circle of human life. Such a notion therefore of the nature of man, as supposes his rational faculties bestowed upon him only to make him miserable, must be false: and consequently the other notion is the just and true one.

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As reason then was graciously afforded us by our Creator to regulate the passions; unless all our ideas of the divine wisdom and goodness are very false and imperfect, it must be fufficient to answer the end. From whence it appears not only probable but clear, from the fairest deductions of reason, that man was originally endued with every quality in the highest degree suited to his nature, and, if properly exerted, necessary to promote his good; which amounts to what is understood by man's original perfection.

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On the supposition then, that man was created perfect; the introduction of moral evil is, I think, a fufficient proof, that he was likewise created free. But independent of that supposition, his free agency may be briefly proved from your own concessions. You acknowledge man "to have " fuch a degree of free-will, as to make " him accountable, and justly punishable " for the abuse of it \*." We are justly ac-

<sup>\*</sup> Free Enquiry, p. 128.

countable for an action as it is good or evil, only as we have it in our power to avoid the one, and perform the other. If therefore we have a degree of free-will sufficient to render us accountable and justly punishable for our actions; we have free-will sufficient to enable us to avoid the commission of such actions: and that is all the free-will contended for \*.

\* To the above remark, in the Enquirer's own words, take his reply. "To all this the Author replies, only, that he is affured, that, if any intelligent Rea-" der will peruse the whole together with candour and " attention, it will evidently appear that these accusations " are entirely groundless. He makes no manner of doubt, but that man is endued with free will, and is justly pu-" nishable for the abuse of it; and hopes he has so ex-" pressed himself through this whole Piece, as to leave " no uncertainty of his opinion on that question: all he " means is, that though the abuse of free will is undoubtedly the immediate cause of moral evil, yet it cannot " from thence derive its original admission into the works " of a benevolent Creator; because man not being a selfexistent and independent being, must receive that will " itself, together with his nature and formation, from the " Supreme Author of all things: for which reason he can-" not apprehend, that the general wickedness of mankind ee can

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These propositions then being true, that man was created perfect and free; the consequence appears to me plain, and the argu-

" can be an accident proceeding from their unforeseen

" wrong elections, by which the whole benevolent system

" is defeated; but must be a part, and a material part

" too, of the original plan of creation, wifely calculated

" by the incomprehensible operations of wice and punish-

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"ment, to promote the good and happiness of the whole."

Preface to the last Edit. of Free Enquiry, p. 15.

Is there not the very same inconsistency in this comment, that was before detected in the original doctrine? And does not this his unwillingness to recant in a matter of the most glaring absurdity prove him guilty of that obstinacy, with which in general terms, he fo unfairly charges all who diffent from him? The fum of the long passage above quoted, just amounts to this: the Enquirer makes no doubt, but man is endued with free will enough to render him juftly punishable for the abuse of it; notwithstanding he is by nature necessarily determined to such abuse of it in order to promote the good and happiness of the whole by the incomprehensible operations of vice and punishment. If this be not an incomprehensible doctrine, I know not what is. For where is the freedom of will, if the Soul be by nature determined to Evil: or where the justice of punishing a Being for actions, to the commission of which he was by nature unavoidably determined: or lattly, how can reason be brought ment conclusive: that therefore the introduction of sin, or moral evil into the world, is not imputable to God, nor the necessary

to reconcile fuch a fystem, as the Enquirer would obtrude on us, with divine justice, or goodness, or wisdom, or power?

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In order to account for the introduction of moral evil, he in effect denies the existence of it. For when once evil becomes so necessary as he represents it, it loses its nature as a moral evil; for a moral evil implies in it a voluntary breach of some known law: but how can that breach be voluntary, which was caused by an infinite power in the most proper way of efficiency?

The truth is, the whole strength of argument here exerted is levelled at a quarter, I know none who will undertake to defend: I know none, who ground the introduction of moral evil on the doctrine of free will. To account for the fall of man from the nature of liberty, would be to suppose it the certain consequence of his liberty; and if it was the certain consequence of his liberty, no blame could be imputed to him, nor any punishment in strict justice inslicted on him. But to reconcile such fall with the attributes of God from the nature of liberty, is a quite different thing; is what we may do, what we must do: for reason cannot reconcile the fall of man with the infinite goodness and justice of God on any other principle. Objects of desire

consequence of human nature; but very reconcileable with reason, and the high ideas reasoning Beings have of the divine attributes, in confideration of the abuse that man might make of that high yet dangerous trust reposed in him, his freedom of will and action. True it is, that his Creator might have put it out of his power to have committed fin, by endowing him with a greater degree of perfection; or by restraining his will; but I dare not fay, " he had " much better have done fo \*." God might have created him a Being necessarily determined to what was good; but then he would have been no longer man: both the beauty and reward of virtue would then have been

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defire without, and appetites liable to be excited by them within, to which we may add the evil follicitations of malignant spirits, were, as we are informed, the cause of our ruin, though not the necessary one. Freedom of will stamped the conduct of man, in inclining to those sollicitations, with the character of evil: but freedom of will was not the cause of such evil.

<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 130.

lost; and this world would have been a state of rewards, and not of probation. And this is the reason, why Simplicius in his Commentary on the thirty-fourth chapter of Epictetus, though no friend to Christianity, did in this article entirely fall in with the scriptural account; attributing the Origin of Evil not to matter, but to the will of man.

God, from the beginning of time foresaw the ill use man would make of this gift of free will; and therefore prepared a remedy; the redemption of mankind by the promised seed who should bruise the serpent's head. However ingenious therefore may be your conjectures, the rational Enquirer may stop here in his search after the Origin of Evil. In endeavouring to investigate it more nicely, he will only be apt to lose himself in the endless mazes of error and perplexity.

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Was ever for instance, a more extravagant conjecture, than what you hazard in the the 131st and following-pages. The introduction of natural evil, 'tis there afferted, God could not prevent. And he caused moral evil to be introduced, in order to give an air of justice to natural evil; being thus made as it were the punishment of sin: therefore, because according to your supposition it was necessary that one man should have the stone, the gout, or rheumatism; he, or some other man, for it signifies not who, must cut a throat, pick a pocket, or break open a house; in order to make those diseases an act of divine justice in the punishment of sin.

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I hope, Sir, I do not misunderstand you, I am sure I do not voluntarily. And I expect the same from you, in my attempt to explain two words which you are pleased to charge with a contradiction in terms \*, viz. original sin. Original signifying innate, and sin

\* Origin of Evil, p. 144.

the act of an accountable Being. Is there any contradiction in calling Adam's, that is, man's first transgression, the original transgression, or original sin? How original comes to fignify innate, perhaps you can explain to But, you will add, how does Adam's first transgression concern me? In it's confequence, in a stain or innate corruption, derived from thence, and from him entailed upon the whole human race. Nor is this fo highly incredible, as you may at first thought fuppose it. That a man may by his vicious amours contract diforders, which may entail rottenness and disease on his innocent posteterity, even to the third and fourth generation, cannot be denied. The cases with regard to the apparent injustice of them are fimilar: experience proves the reality of the one, and why will you deny the possibility of the other? Certain powerful drugs there are, which will change the mind as well as body, and give quite a new turn to the passions. Ebriety will work a temporary change

change in the disposition and habits of the mind as really and perfectly, as the Syrens of old are fabled to have done on the body. Where then the impossibility; that the good affections originally implanted in human nature should have been corrupted; or that such corruption or stain should have been entailed on mankind, even down to remotest posterity.

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## LETTER VI.

SIR,

YOwever differently you and I may think on fome points, I am glad to find one in which we are entirely agreed \*; viz. that this life is a state of probation: and such not only our wife felves, but the wifeft and most thinking men of all ages and nations supposed it. Man must therefore have, besides the knowledge of good and evil, a freedom of will and action. For if necessarily determined to good, where would be the virtue in refifting evil? if to evil, where the vicioulness in pursuing it? and in either of these cases, where is the trial of his obedience? The abuse then of this gift of free-will it was, that introduced moral evil into the world; and scarce any thing is more obvious,

<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 120.

than that political evils are the confequence of moral. If no fuch thing can at this day be hoped for as a perfect form of government; it is not because mankind are by nature incapable of receiving or retaining it, but because their vices have made them so. If we consider the hydra nature of vice, one of whose heads is seldom struck off, but from the prolific trunk sprout out at least two; if we reflect on the strong force of example, by which the numerous progeny increafed with mankind, and univerfally diffused themselves: the very notion of a perfeet government is abfurd, and the ingenuity of man in the present corrupt state of things can in speculation scarcely effect it. Private vices would be eternally clashing with public good: the fingle vice of avarice, which must necessarily produce corruption and venality, is alone fufficient to obstruct the wheels of the most perfect government. But though we must divest mankind of their vices before we can suppose them capable of a perfect

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a perfect form of government; we need not divest them of their nature. The question therefore is not, whether a perfect form of government can now fubfift, but whether it ever could; that is, whether human nature could ever have been capable of it.

To descend to particulars, I cannot be persuaded you have sufficient grounds for so peremptorily characterifing mankind in their state of nature\*, as the bulls and bears, Hobbes represents them: fighting for fuperiority with clubs and fifts, and availing themselves of every villainy to obtain it. Burlamaqui on the contrary supposes, mankind were originally divided into families; and that those families lived under the paternal government of the person who was their Chief, as their father or grandfather. These families increasing, they at length composed a national body; governed by the will of

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 168.

him or those, on whom for mutual good they had conferred the authority. I might add to this author many respectable names, who speak the same language. And pray what hinders, but that mankind unpolluted by vice, unseduced by example, thus associated for convenience and common good, might make common good their standard and rule of action\*,

It is an undeniable truth, that man was created for fociety; and it is equally certain,

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\* Erant, ut Justinus loquitur, omnia communia & indivisa omnibus, veluti unum cunstis patrimonium esset.

Neque is status durare non potuit, si aut in magna
quadam simplicitate perstitissent homines, aut vixissent
inter se in mutua quadam eximia charitate. Horum
alterum, communionem scilicet ex simplicitate eximia,
videre licet in quibussam Americae populis, qui per
secula multa sine incommodo in eo more perstiterunt.

Alterum vero, communionem nimirum ex charitate
exhibuerunt olim Esseni, deinde Christiani qui Hierosolymis primi extiterunt, ac nunc quoque non pauci, qui
vitam degunt asceticam.

Puff. de Jur. Bell. lib. 2. c. 2. §. 2.

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that the production of happiness was the divine motive for creating him. Must not God then seem to counter act his own gracious purposes, in entailing a necessity of evil upon this aptitude and disposition for fociety; which he himself with a gracious intention implanted in us? Or, if we think of the Deity reverently and justly as we ought, may we not more fairly conclude, that as certainly as we were created for fociety, we were created to live happily in fociety? And if the case be otherwise, if every fystem of government be full of variety of evils: let us enquire into the mysterious cause. Neither need we search far for this: fince, if we content ourselves with your own relation of facts, it will appear most evident, that evils of government are owing univerfally and immediately to moral evils. There is not in all this black catalogue one fingle evil enumerated, that does not flow from thence. Tyranny and oppression for instance are derived from pride, felfishness, and cruelty;

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rice and diffipation; war and defolation, from envy, lust, revenge, injustice, &c. Since then political evils are manifestly deducible from moral; before moral evil was introduced into the world, it is impossible that political evils could exist.

And however you may affect to despise the common opinion of an original state of innocence; you have not offered one single argument to demonstrate either the impossibility or improbability of it. On the contrary it is shewn, that such a notion is most agreeable to the nature of man; that it has been handed down by long tradition, and confirmed by the pens of men of the most extensive learning and highest abilities. To this purpose innumerable quotations might, from various authors, be alledged; but I will content myself with only mentioning his notions of this matter, whose authority of all heathen writers, is most to be depended

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depended on. In that happy age, Plato, God was the only governor; but when the beautiful order of things was perverted, the Deity retired from the helm, and irregularity and confusion followed. This Platonic theocracy, agreeable to what was before observed +, supposes that mankind originally lived accountable for their actions to no human magistrate, nor subject to any human laws: God himself as it were immediately governing them by that univerfal law of conscience so deeply imprinted in the mind \*. An entire freedom from all restraint of laws is always enumerated amongst the bleffings of the golden age. From whence it plainly appears, that in their notions of a primæval state the ancient fages did not, as some have presumed, suppose only a more innocent and happy state than the present, but a state of perfect hap-

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<sup>\*</sup> Letter V.

<sup>\*</sup> Nemortos de enervou, moditerar oun nouv. Plato. Pol. piness.

piness. Since the supposition of a state, in which vice prevailed without any laws to controul and restrain it, gives us the idea of a state so very wretched, as we want a name to express it by.

e thefe (viz. political evil Hence, as political evils do confessedly refult from moral \*, the fame reasoning which has been used to prove that moral evil was not effential to human nature, includes an answer to all arguments of its necessary imperfection, drawn from the vast train of political evils, observable in all governments that subsist; with which indeed they are fo complicated, that superficially examined they feem as it were naturally inherent in them. For could we take away the cause, the effect must necessarily cease. But though to have a perfect form of government, it be necessary to be perfectly virtuous; though at this day we are not to look

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 188.

for a Platonian commonwealth, or Utopia; yet by retrenching the number of our moral evils, we may proportionably abridge our political ones. And conformably to this opinion, you with great truth and propriety remark, that + " these (viz. political evils) can never be removed, until those (moral evils) are first amended." Therefore as these imperfections and abuses in government can only be redreffed by a reformation of manners; fuch a reformation every good and worthy man ought to endeavour to effect in his own private capacity; and the legislature is more particularly bound to labour after in a public one. For if, as you affirm, politics be a science, as reducible to certainty as the mathematics; this must be one universal invariable principle of it, viz. the more virtuous a people is, the more great and flourishing, the more fecure, prosperous, and happy that nation will be guodi ; alous

+ Origin of Evil, p. 188.

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This is an incontestible truth, and the different periods of every state will afford instances of it. But perhaps no state more firiking ones than the Roman. Whether Rome owed its greatness to its virtue or to chance, is the subject of one of Machiavel's Discourses. But with due deference to the great Florentine; by questioning it, he seems to have made a doubt of that which would else appear absolutely unquestionable. Chance, that is, some unforeseen, unnoticed, unaccountable accidents, may raise a siege, or win a battle: but I would as foon believe Chance capable of building the city, as of raising the state from nothing to universal empire, in a long and almost uninterrupted war of fix or feven hundred years. Nothing could effect this but a fleady uniform virtue. And how great that virtue was, may be judged from a fingle anecdote, that one of their own historians has left us; and which conveys to the reader a more lively idea of it, than whole volumes written on the fubject F 2 afford

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afford us. " The first divorce, says Val. Max. "that was ever heard of in Rome, hap-" pened in the year of the city 520." How must that nation suffer in comparison; in which, if I forget not, an ingenious author has observed, that seventeen divorces happened in the short space of one year; amongst those too who pride themselves on being accounted people of fashion +. Inviting then as fashion is, how many more separations may we suppose to have happened amongst those of less note; who are always fond of aping their superiors, and never more so than in their vices!

Speaking with a just contempt of speculative politicians, you affert, that in politics most principles speculatively right, are practically wrong. It may be fo; but I am fure the instances you produce in support of your affertion, do by no means tend to confirm it. conveys to the reader a more lively idea of

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On the other hand, either so unhappy am I in my judgment, or you so unfortunate in your proofs, I cannot help thinking they declare directly against you. Your first instance is, that it must appear to speculative politicians an undeniable truth, that "those who are " possest of most property, will fight best in " its defence." Most people, I believe will, on speculative principles, deny that: they will know, that he, who has most to lose, will be apt to be most afraid of himself: they will know likewise, that the mere soldier of fortune has most likely been brought up hardily, and from the narrowness of his circumstances having been inured to struggle with difficulties and dangers, will therefore be most likely to face them with patience and refolution \*:

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<sup>\*</sup> Cur tantum interest inter novum & veterem exercitum, quantum experti sumus? Ætas tironum plerumque melior: sed ferre laborem, contemnere Volnus consuetudo docet. C1c. Tusc. Disp. lib. 2. §. 15.

Your next instance is, " that national busi-" ness must appear to be most successfully " carried on by affemblies of men unin-" Auenced and unconnected." Uninfluenced. if you please, but unconnected, I believe few people will allow. He must be a whimsical speculatift indeed, who can fancy five hundred men, pulling five hundred different ways, will carry on work fo quickly and fo well, as the fame number of men connected, and pulling the fame way. Your last instance is a more notable one than either of the other, viz. " that unbounded " liberty, civil and ecclefiaftical, must appear most conducive to public happiness " and virtue." Indeed, Sir, yourfelf and a few, I hope a very few more, are the whole body of men that can entertain fuch dangerous opinions.

These instances alledged, being so very false in point, tempt me to dispute other of your political maxims; and particularly y

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to except to the party-coloured drefs, in which you have decked your able statesman.

commence with the former continues where

Far from flattering the humours of immoral men by falling in with their vices, to stop the progress of moral evil will be the principal scope and aim of the truly great minister, which he will sedulously endeavour by every probable method, by the authority of his station, and his own example. And hence may be perceived the difference between a good and able minister, and the great little man, of whose portrait you have drawn so accurate a sketch; between him who makes it his chief care to promote the good of his country, and him who fancies himself placed in that distinguished sphere, only to aggrandize himself, his friends, and dependants, and secure himfelf in the possession of so much power and gain. The one will support himself by his own greatness and intrinsic merit; the other will lay hold on every external affiftance. F 4

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To an indefatigable attention to business the one will add difinterestedness, and unshaken integrity; the other, fraud and low cunning: the one will not devote his time to pleasure, because many hours, that the pressing duties of his station require, will thereby be uselessly squandered away; the other will avail himself of it, by winning over to his views of interest those who are already engaged in the fame pleasurable pursuits: the one will defy the voice of envy, the other court its filence: the honest and upright intentions of the one will appear fo evident, that fools must see the good of them, and knaves will not be able to pervert them; the felfish views of the other must be disguised by every art of venality and adulation: the one will confront his enemies, and face their malevolence with a confidence which nothing can inspire, but a confcious sense of having discharged his duty; the other in such a fituation will bear himself through by effrontery and bribes.

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According to this representation of things, and in this view only may be reconciled those seeming inconsistencies, with which you have, by fome superficial readers, been charged, in your description of that little creature, a Great Man.

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## LETTER VII.

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THE subject of the sixth and last letter is Religious Evils: of all others, if your reasoning be conclusive, the most enormous, and as you apprehend the most difficult to be accounted for: I shall therefore be indulged the liberty to examine the weight of your arguments the more circumstantially.

Man is a being formed with passions, but endowed with reason to govern them; created for society, and therefore our country, our parents, and our friends, claim part of our regard. For the better conduct of ourselves with respect to these several relations, agreeably to the dignity of our nature, and the end of our creation, the Almighty has furnished

furnished us with capacities sufficient to form systems of ethics and polity, and hath so far revealed himself to us in the book of nature, that we are enabled to trace him in his works, and from fuch contemplation of his infinite wildom, unbounded power, and transcendant goodness are naturally led to love, fear, honour, and adore him: which amounts to what we understand by religion. Ethics teach us our duty to ourselves and others; polity, our general conduct confidered as a community or state; and Religion inculcates our duty to that Being, whom we stile God, from whom we derive our existence, and on whom that existence depends. And these united, compleat our character as men. For without such result of our reason, we shall difcern little excellence in human nature above that of the brute creation: diffinguished only by an erect posture, we have the honour to ftrut about upon two legs, whilst monkeys and affes run upon all four.

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Strange is it then, if he who fashioned us. and understandeth all our parts, does really understand so little of our nature, and the nature of those endowments, by which he has thus exalted man above the irrational part of the creation; as that those very faculties, which were intended for our good and happinefs, should, without any will or fault of ours, be consequentially and inevitably productive of misery and evil. Or, if he did know it, how \* wonderful must it indeed appear, that Omnipotence should be so severe and void of all benevolence to his creatures, as to fuffer them to wander fo many ages in the dark; and at last to afford them a light, but alas! a light fo faint and glimmering, as ferved only to affright them! A cruel and capricious God truly: And if this was really the case, I am afraid even your ingenuity would find much greater difficulty than you feem aware of, in removing the heavy charge

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 195.

thus wantonly brought against Omnipotence. But, if we examine a little more deeply into this matter, it will appear, that neither the first ages of the world walked in absolute and necessary darkness, nor, when the fullness of time was come that the Sun of brightness should appear, that this light was imperfect.

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If we look back as far as history will carry us, we shall find that the practice of religion was universally neither so \* inhuman, obscene, stupid, nor execrable as you suppose it. Those inhuman, obscene, stupid, and execrable practices were the corruption of later ages; and only tend to shew the absolute necessity there was of a Divine Revelation. The annual oblation of the fruits of the earth was originally no more than a tacit acknowledgment of the Omnipotence and providence of God, and a significant confession, that whatever is enjoyed in this world

<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 196.

is the free-gift of his good will and pleafure. The fame may be affirmed of the facrifices; in regard to which; though I love fensibility, I cannot but fmile at the tender concern you express for the innocent herds and flocks \*: the cruelty to which was just the same then, as is exercised now the day before every market, throughout this populous city. For the flaughtered cattle that were facrificed upon festivals and such particular occasions, by Princes, Chiefs, and indeed by all perfons proportionably to their rank and condition in life, were not flupidly and ufelessly burnt to ashes, but + were broiled and roasted for the repalt of their friends, and the entertainment of the poor: and were well calculated to keep alive the spirit of hospitality t. the earth was originally no more than a tage

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 196.

<sup>+</sup> Vid. Hom. II. lib. i. ver. 459.

That we find the penurious man characterised by Theophrastus for selling part of his victim. Τε μεν κερειου πλην των κερειον τα κρεια αποδιδοσθαι.

Thus we find though the real cause of the institution was lost to the Pagans, they saw some use in it, and continued the practice: The Christian is enabled to trace it back to its first origin, and can produce a cause equal to so general an effect.\*

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True it is, that some nations offered human sacrifices even to wood and stones; yet not as is here afferted; all nations. For God left not himself without witness, that even the light of nature which he had implanted in the mind of man, was sufficient to guide him aright, whilst the mind remained unobscured by that corruption and depravity to which we were liable, and which gradually took root in our hearts; and so long as reason maintained her throne in our minds, unshaken by the perverseness of our will, and our proneness to evil. There was a people, that even in the most

\* See Letter I.

corrupt times retained a true knowledge of the Deity, and worshipped the true and only God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth.

The Christian is enabled to trace it book th

But as this light of nature was too faint and glimmering to pierce the almost general darkness that vice and error had gradually introduced in the world; a more explicit revelation of the divine will was feen necessary, and therefore graciously dispensed to us. A light this, neither faint nor glimmering; which terrifies us indeed with the prospect of future danger, but with no other intent than to enable us to avoid it. This has most explicitly informed us, thar our fouls are immortal; it has taught us, that future happiness will be the result of virtue and piety; and that vice as hateful to God will be punished with misery. That, by having the rewards and punishments thus distinctly pointed out to us, we might be the more strongly induced, to labour after the one, and cautiously to avoid the other.

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As to the infufficiency of this light, it shall be examined under the four general articles, to which you have objected: viz. its want of universality, authenticity, perspicuity, and policy. Which objection if just, the religion, as you rightly infer, must have been foon corrupted; and we might then conclude, as you extravagantly affert, that its great author never defigned it to be free from any of these imperfections. And yet we fee that this religion of a day, which like a comet was intended only to blaze a little to amuse the world, and then vanish away, has subsisted for these seventeen hundred Perhaps not without some corruptions in the feveral fystems that have been formed from it: But upon an impartial enquiry it will appear, that those corruptions were owing to the pride, obstinacy, or ignorance of the feveral fects, and not to any defect in it's original constitution.

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He who can confidently affert, that this religion was revealed only to a small and obscure corner in parables and mysteries\*, discovers little converse with those writings, that are relative to it. For by these we find, that the first propagators of it did not confine their labours to Judea, but extended them into all the various parts of the known world. Nor did they feek to foift their religion upon barbarous and uncivilized nations only, with a view to take advantage of ignorance and credulity: But those most polished states of Greece and Rome were appealed to; and feveral of the most learned men of those times and places thought it no derogation either to their learning or wisdom to embrace christianity. So that I find good reason flatly to contradict your affertion, and to affirm that those things were not done in a corner. And as to the parables, in which Christ delivered many of his doctrines, so plain and obvious

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Origin of Evil, p. 200.

are they; that whoever can hear without prejudice, and judge without partiality, may eafily comprehend them.

the finestive of their intentions; and not it

The next argument you advance, in proof that Christ never intended his religion to be free from the imperfections + above objected to it, is, that He guarded not its original purity, by committing it to any written records. &c. Till there be shewn sufficient reason to conclude, that those several histories of the life of Christ are spurious; or at least till other authentic histories be produced, in which his life and Actions are otherwise recorded; we may fairly efteem the original purity of his religion as well guarded, as though he had left us a history of his life under his own hand. For what ends could those despised, persecuted men propose to ferve by obtruding errors and falsehoods upon the world: who, as you well observe, were

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+ See Letter VII. p. 97.

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bonest enough to die for the religion they published. And indeed this observation, which you unwarily stumble on, is a full proof of the sincerity of their intentions; and no bad confirmation of the truth of those doctrines, of which they themselves were so thoroughly convinced. Indeed that this reslection would be of no great service to the point you are labouring to establish, you seem aware; and therefore artfully tack to it a presumptive affertion of your own: That these persons were notwithstanding never wise enough to understand it.

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That a person may be charged with a divine commission, the doctrines of which in their full extent may not be persectly understood by him, is a point I readily accede to: and that such a defect of comprehension in the person so charged, is no objection to the reality of his inspiration, I expect you will as readily allow. Inspiration according to the precise import of the word, implies not men's private conceptions, but doctrines

doctrines fuggested by divine influence and direction. The authors of the inspired writings might or might not comprehend the doctrines they promulgated: and which they taught, not because they were understood by them, but because they were divinely delegated to them. Their own private comprehension therefore of the doctrines the Evangelists published, is a matter of no confequence: it cannot always be clearly afcertained; much less can your affertion be allowed, or otherwise supported, than by shewing that they advanced idle articles of faith, which they endeavoured to explain in an abfurd, irrational manner. And whenever that is made appear, more of truth may be acknowledged in this letter, than an unprejudiced reader can rest at present convinced of,

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Hence may be observed how roughly you have handled the first propagators of christianity: whom, if assertions may be admitted to pass for arguments, you have proved

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to be as honest a set of blockheads as ever were heard of: who taught they knew not what; and fuffered ignominy, pain, and death, they scarcely knew why. Yet has this composition of ignorance and honesty founded and established such a religion, as the most polished parts of the world have embraced; and which the most inveterate enemies to virtue, with all the artillery of Deism, have not been able to overturn; calculated to inform the meanest capacities, yet important enough to engage the studies and win the admiration of men of the greatest abilities. After these uncandid invectives against the first publishers of Christianity, it would be idle to expect that the doctrines they promulgated will fare better in your hands. A little dabbling in divinity is a dangerous thing; and, like a little smattering in poetry, claims the friendly admonition, " to drink " deep, or taste not." Your talents as a divine will appear from your critique on the two following passages.

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\* All policy be disclaims in express words, saying, " my kingdom is not of this world:" that is, I meddle not with the political affairs of mankind. False glosses and a wilful perversion of an author's meaning are the last wretched shifts to which recourse is had in support of an indefensible cause: but the inference you endeavour to draw from the above passage, viz. that therefore his doctrine is against civil policy, will by no means follow even from the forced interpretation you have yourfelf annexed to the words. In order to arrive at the true fense and meaning of a doubtful passage, your method I presume is carefully to compare it with the context, and to consider the main scope and general drift of the author. By this rule let the passage before us be tried. The Jews, that they might the more easily effect their wicked purpose, and procure the death of Jesus, laboured to render him suspected by Pilate of sedition and ten david Rot

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 201.

innovation in the state, as setting himself up for King in opposition to the Emperor. Pilate endeavoured by feveral indirect questions, to come at the truth of these infinuations from his own mouth. "Thy own nation, " faid he, hath delivered thee unto me." Which artifice Jesus observing, directly anfwered him, " My kingdom is not of this " world: if my kingdom were of this world, " then would my fervants fight that I should " not be delivered into the hands of the " Jews." That is, I have indeed a kingdom, which I do not deny having professed to establish: but, as I always inculcated, it is not a kingdom of this Present world, nor any way tends to cause disturbance in the government. For if it had, my fervants would have fought, &c.

I am forry to find you not less unhappy in your application of the passage next cited: + Think not that I come to send peace on the e

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 202.

earth, &c. The contents of the chapter in which these words occur, are the instructions which Christ gives his Apostles upon fending them forth into the world on the Grand Errand to which they were appointed. He forewarns them of the difficulties they must encounter, and the evils they had to ftruggle with in their promulgation of the Gospel; that when those evils did overtake them, they might from their fore-knowledge and expectation of them, bear them with the greater constancy and firmer resolution. " Think not, says be, that I am come to " fend peace on earth, &c. That is: Do not persuade yourselves that you may avoid a most severe trial of your constancy; do not expect that the world will entertain a religion fo destructive of luxury, ease, and pleafure, and fo opposite to men's natural lusts and appetites, as is this I come to fettle, with an implicit refignation to it; in the love and peaceableness of it. By no means: but on the contrary, to fee you facrifice your own

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own ease and domestic happiness to the publie cause of virtue and religion; to see you engage yourselves in unnecessary troubles and afflictions, when you might have enjoyed peace and fatisfaction at home, will exasperate your friends and relations more particularly against you, and your bitterest enemies shall be they of your own household. This I humbly conceive to be the true meaning of the passage; which respected the Apostles and first converts with their connections, and bore no reference to future ages.

Upon these supposed imperfections in all religions, the Christian not excepted, it is entertaining to observe how dexterously you press into your fervice another argument in proof of the general imperfection of human nature. But the truth of those supposed imperfections, as far as we have proceeded, appearing weak and groundless, this argument of course falls to the ground. Exulting how-

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ever in the discovery of imperfections, which exist not but in your own imagination, how triumphant your exclamation! \* From what inscrutable source do all these imperfections derive their existence? Some source astonishing indeed, and remote from ordinary understandings, yet not altogether inscrutable. Since it feems that Omnipotence has to you committed the keys of knowledge: has gracioully vouchfafed to unravel to you all his mysterious plan of dispensing to us: has to you accounted, why he has attributed to mankind just reason enough to make them miserable, and just enough religion to enable them to worship him in the darkness of ignorance and error. How easy do the most abstruse matters appear to us, when once explained; and how strange it seems, that no one before you should have hit upon this lucky conceit! " That + man is na-

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 160. + Ibid. p. 162.

<sup>&</sup>quot; turally

"turally imperfect, and therefore incapable

" of receiving a perfect religion."

It is necessary again and again to remind you, that perfection is a term merely relative; and therefore it may justly be asked, what degree of perfection is here intended. As to absolute perfection, we do not arrogate it; neither do we ascribe it to beings of a much superior nature: it is an attribute that can only be appropriated to the Deity himself. All that we contend for is, what every other species of created Beings is allowed to have, perfection in our nature: which I understand the old school axiom, Omne ens est perfectum, to signify.

Man is incapable of receiving a religion calculated for superior Beings; but why should we suppose the all-wise Creator proposed for his observance a religion, which it was not in his power to observe? \* Was a

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 211.

legislator, to use your own allusion, to compose laws for a nursery; they must be childish laws, I grant: but you must likewise grant, that those laws would be so well adapted to the age and understanding of those children, for whose observance they were intended; that neither the comprehension of them would be beyond the reach of their capacity, nor the observance of them beyond their ability. The wisdom of the legislator is concerned so far as this.

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No matter: having with all the pomp of ipsedixitism asserted, a much easier method than that of proving, that "Man, being "naturally imperfect, was necessarily inca-"pable of receiving a perfect religion," your next step is, to account for so extraordinary a fact. And in explication of this impracticability of imparting to mankind a perfect religion, you observe there are but two methods by which this can be effected; either by the deductions which God empowers them to make

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make by the force of natural reason, or by the extraordinary interposition of divine revelation. The first, after some pertinent reflections upon the nature of it, and those difficulties that must necessarily attend it, and deductions from its known effect unassisted by revelation, you conclude to be ineffectual. And in order to prove the other method equally so, recourse is had to the above-mentioned hypothesis, the imperfection of man, and in consequence of that, his incapability of receiving a perfect religion.

It must be confessed that Omnipotence cannot impart knowledge to creatures, of which he has made them naturally incapable, without at the same time changing their natures. He cannot instruct a mole in astronomy, or an oyster in music; without imparting to them faculties necessary for the acquisition of those sciences: and then that is no longer a mole, nor this an oyster. But though the nature of these creatures be imperfect,

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111 perfect, yet, as was before observed, who doubts that they are perfect in their nature? Or, to explain myself more clearly, every faculty that they possess is in the highest degree adapted to the nature of each species, and the uses they have occasion to make of them. norwhile excing it imp pleased God explic

Man, though the lowest in the chain of intellectual beings, is yet endowed with a faculty above the brute creation, which we call reason. And it is absurd to suppose, that this faculty, rightly and properly exerted, is not so far adequate and perfect, as to answer all the purposes it was intended for, or we have occasion to make of it. By it we are enabled to difcern that there is a God; which is the foundation of all religion. And indeed, that he has ordained fuch duties, as religion requires of us, you feem not to deny: in that you acknowledge \* the

Origin of Evil, p. 198.

Christian religion to have something supernatural in it. How fevere then is the lot of mankind, who are endowed with a faculty, which enables them to discover that there are certain duties to be performed to God and their fellow-creatures, as necessary to their happiness: yet this unenviable faculty, which, notwithstanding it has pleased God explicitly to reveal himself to us upon those points, is incapable of discerning what these duties are. For in the name of goodness what end does the mere knowledge that there is a religion ferve; if our faculties are absolutely incapable of knowing what that religion is, and wherein it confifts? For my own part, I have more extensive ideas of the divine goodness, and the capacity of the human mind. to noisebased tel dainly a Lou

But that a matter of fuch importance may not depend upon my ideas, or even, more enlarged, more improved as they may be, on your own; let us rest the truth upon fact, and

and not surmise: let us examine, whether the religion, which confessedly appears to have the the fairest pretensions to be a perfect religion, be really defective in those general points, which you have established as the true criteria of perfection: Universality, Authenticity, Perspicuity, and Policy.

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reneral points, which you have affabliffed SIR, mitaling to himse son and is

LETTER

TITHEN I hear your fo warm profesfions of zeal for the interests of a religion, that wants Universality, Authenticity, Perspicuity, and Polity; I must either doubt your fincerity, or confess myself at a loss to account for the principles you act on. Want of Universality is a paltry objection of long standing, which the enemies of revelation have piously transmitted from one to another, as a fort never to be given up. Its futility hath been fufficiently exposed; but it hath still the air of an objection; and, as with those to whom it may appear new, it may appear with fome weight, I suppose is never to be dropped. But it is on account of the Authenticity of Christianity that we believe it, of its Perspicuity that we profit by

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by it, and of its correspondence with sound Polity that it is adopted, established, encouraged. And did it really want Authenticity, Perspicuity, and Polity, it would neither merit the belief, nor practice of a wise man, nor be any ways entitled to the protection, much less the encouragement of the state.

By the want of Universality is understood, to use your own explanation, \* that whenever and wherever a religion was first revealed, there must have been times and places, in which it was not revealed. To this affertion, tho advanced as an unquestionable truth, a reader little disposed to cavil may justly object: and the proof of it will be found a more difficult task than you seem to be aware of, as well as attended with such suppositions as I trust you would never assume. For if the world did not exist from all eternity, or was

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\* Origin of Evil, p. 212.

not univerfally peopled at the time it begun to exist; in confutation of both which hypotheses we have the concurrent testimony of reason, history, and tradition: then it must be acknowledged at least possible, that a religion might be first revealed; when there were neither times nor societies, in which it was not revealed. Nor is fuch a thing only barely possible; but I am authorised by history to think, that there was a religion imparted to the first man +. Reason too seems to confirm me in this opinion: else how shall we account for those various religions, or rather those various modes of religion, which in a short time so universally diffused themselves through all focieties on the earth: unless we allow them to have been the outlines or shadows of the religion originally imparted to mankind, depraved and corrupted from its ancient purity; the consequence of its having no other foundation, than the natural

+ See Butler's Anal.

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breed confirmations, beer the tell of Univer-If then we enquire into the nature of that original religion, it is not unreasonable to take our account from the most ancient hiftory extant, which is the Mosaic history of the creation. According to which we find, that in the days of the first man the Sabbath was appointed, Marriage was instituted, and Prayer and Adoration were made to the Deity. Here is plainly the substance of that religion, the Perfecter and Finisher of which, from the beginning of time, was promised: he, whose heel should bruise the serpent's head. For the end of Christ's coming was not to abolish the old and fundamental religion, but to perfect it: he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. Hence then the chriftian religion appears to be nothing new, no novel fystem, no other than the perfection of that religion, originally imparted to mankind; while there existed neither times nor H 3. focieties

focieties in which it was not published. And thus will it, without any false glosses or forced constructions, bear the test of Universality, for which you contend. Nor is it unworthy to observe how, by a train of providential dispensations, the Divine Being continued gradually to clear up that religion from its original obscurity; and encrease the faint glimmering he had at first afforded, by sending at various periods, patriarchs, prophets, and holy men of old, to prepare the world for a reception of that light which the Sun of Brightness disfused, when the full-ness of time was come \*.

But if you contend for an universality of religion in a more unlimited sense than this; if your meaning be, that an universal religion is that which must have been alike revealed to all men, and at all times: the argument, which is taken from the justice of

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See Discourse on Conscience.

God, proceeds upon a falle foundation, and defroys itself by proving too much. For by the fame way of arguing, may we not arraign the justice of the Deity in affording to the poor wretches in Hudson's Bay scarce the mere necessaries of subsistence, whilst on Italy and other happy parts of the globe he hath dealt out with a liberal hand not only all the necessaries, but all the comforts and elegancies of life? Why has his providence permitted the knowledge of arts and fciences to illumine Europe in to diftinguished a manner; whilft the Africans are in a great meafure as ignorant, barbarous, and uncivilized as the very favages in their defarts? And to carry the argument fill further, Why is one man fuffered to labour under the pressure of misery, infainy and want; and another equally or perhaps more undeferving of the bleffings of providence, permitted to enjoy affluence, pleasure, and esteem? These things are obvious to the fenfes, and therefore speak for themselves: or he, who can deny God quicker the H 4

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the power to grant advantages to one man above another in any one respect, would be ready to deny him the same power in all respects whatever.

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The truth is, if we look through the world, we shall find that an equal distribution of the goods, as they are termed, of nature or of fortune, is not the method God has chose in dispensing to mankind: but he has afforded them different natural endowments, as well as different opportunities of improving them. And yet notwithstanding these seeming inequalities in his various dispensations to mankind; he, who is all perfection, must be infinitely just.

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In short, there lies in this respect the very same objection against the religion of nature, as against revelation; the want of universality being equally objectible to the one as the other. All men's capacities are not equal; some are endued with a quicker

quicker understanding and more ready perception of things than others; capable of
distinguishing truth from falshood more
clearly; and from thence derive great advantages in the exercise of those duties they
so distinctly discern, over men of slower parts
and inferior abilities. The argument therefore can really prove no more than this;
that there will be a time, when all those
seeming partialities will be accounted for,
and the ways of God fully justified \* to
man ‡

The authenticity of the scriptures has, by able and learned men, been so fully and clearly proved, that I shall not presume to enter farther into this argument, than is absolutely necessary to remove the objections you have

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<sup>\*</sup> See Discourse on Conscience.

treated, than the brevity proposed in these Letters admits; I refer him to Dr. Law's "Considerations on the Theory of Religion."

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started against it. The main stress of which feems to rest upon this affertion: " that " granting a man to be inspired, yet it se feems utterly impracticable, that he should " ever produce indubitable credentials of a "divine commission to others, who are un-" inspired \*." That we may not dispute about words, it will not be amifs to come to an explanation of terms.

entities pareinlines will be accounted for

By inspiration then I suppose I am to understand a divine conveyance of certain supernatural truths to the mind 1. Now the end of all inspiration, and some end it must have, is to enforce the belief of those truths, with the promulgation of which the inspired perfon is charged. If therefore this divine commission be by nature incapable of being made appear to all those for whose good and happiness it was defigned and promulgated; this gift of inspiration serves no purpose;

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 913.

<sup>‡</sup> See Discourse on Inspiration.

the conferring of it upon any person is unnecessary; and therein God consequently acts in vain: which is an affertion so wild and extravagant, as every act of reason, and every tenet in philosophy disclaim.

tion delily remail inframentles ben said

The question then is, How are we to know when any man is inspired? When I fee a perfon perform things which are infinitely beyond the ordinary operations of nature: when I fee fickness and disease flee before him; whose touch restores fight to the blind; who by his word commands the lame to walk, and even revives the dead: fuch a person I must conclude to be some way super-naturally empowered. Dæmons indeed, for aught I can affert against their power, may possibly have permission and authority to enable men to perform these or the like works. But when I fee thefe works wrought in confirmation of, and to support a more compleat system, of virtue and morality, than the greatest philofophers

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fophers and wifest legislators were ever able to compose: a system, which, whilst it forms the manners, irradiates the mind with so clear truths, that the greatest lights of human reason were comparatively but so many faint and glimmering lamps, which served rather to amuse the mind, than to inform it; to banish the gloom and horrors of dissolution, rather than to present us with a clear prospect of immortality: When this is the case, I will not hesitate to pronounce that person divinely inspired: and as such, of right to command my assent to the truth of those doctrines he prosessed to teach.

I must here take the liberty to remind you of a note, I find in your last edition, which, when you see the consequence of the concession there made, you will probably think proper to retract. \*A sincere belief in the divine authority of Christ's mission, you

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 119.

allow, was indispensibly required by him in all his disciples. Be so good then as to tell us, how this faith was to be propagated; how men were to receive full conviction of the divine authority of Christ's mission? For you affert in the paffage before us, that tho' a man may possibly know when he himfelf is inspired; yet that he should ever produce indubitable credentials of a divine commission to others, who are uninspired, seems utterly impracticable. The argument methodized will run thus: Christ required of his disciples, a fincere belief in the divine authority of his mission; but no man can produce indubitable credentials of a divine commission; therefore Christ required a sincere belief in that, of which it was not in his power to afford them conviction. Possest of a faith fo ready, as not to require fufficient grounds of belief, you may be a Mahometan, a Pagan, or what you please, with the same praises with which you so earnestly boast yourself a Christian. Surely vou

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you will not answer me so absurdly, as by faying, that by indubitable credentials you meaned mathematical demonstration.

how men were to receive full conviction of

The other part of your argument alludes to the distance of time since the transaction of those facts under confideration. But this argument, was it to be admitted as fuch, would prove equally firong and conclusive against our affenting to any of the best attefted and most universally acknowledged facts that are reported in history. It is true, history is not capable of mathematical demonstration. It cannot be so demonstratively proved, that Julius Cæfar was stabbed in the Senate-house, or Richard the IIId. flain in Bosworth field, as that the three angles of every triangle are equal to two right ones: yet I believe the ascertainment of those facts, as firmly as I do the demonstration of this. And wherever the testimony of all bistorians, who have recorded any fact, is general and concurrent: the circumstances

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of facts thus represented, I think, I may, without the imputation of credulity, rest per-suaded of; and cannot without incurring the censure of obstinate and dangerous scepticism, deny:

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But when, besides the concurrent testimony of all who have treated on any point,
it happens that such their accounts were published, whilst the eye-witnesses of those facts
were mostly living; and amongst persons,
who, had they been false, were both interested and disposed to prove the falsity of
them, obtained such universal credit, that
no cotemporary writer has denied, or even
questioned the truth of them; they have then
all the marks of truth, of which history is
capable; and what was true seventeen hundred years ago, must be equally so now.

That facts are liable to be mifrepresented by prejudice and self-interest I readily allow; allow too, if you please, that matters of religion

of it; or what felfills prejudices has fuch a

gion are more exposed to such misrepresentations than things of more ordinary concern. But I believe prejudice and felf-interest have less ascendency over the minds of those who have appeared in defence of Christianity, than of those who have declared themselves against it. Let the religion be true or false, unless the advocate for it be thoroughly perfuaded of the truth of it, why should he labour to involve posterity in error. He manifeftly declares, that he does not believe on the bare authority of those who believed before him; in that he puts the truth of his faith to the test of reason and argument. The dignified priest enjoys the benefit and dignity which refult from his profession, if that religion be false; and what can he do more, be it ever so true? How therefore is his temporal interest concerned in the truth of it; or what felfish prejudices has such a man to engage with? But on the contrary, a religion which hangs like a clog upon bad men's consciences, which restrains their pleafures,

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fures, and thwarts their appetites and inclinations, will naturally possess them with strong prejudices against it. Accordingly we find, that those of the most prosligate and libertine lives are generally its greatest adversaries. Their lives make them wish it to be false: and it is an easy transition, from wishing to believing.

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Its speculative doctrines likewise, you observe, must want perspicuity: and not only the speculative points of a divinely instituted religion, but also those of nature are beyond our comprehension. I cannot tell how the soul acts upon the body; but that it does so act, is a matter therefore not less true. So I am told, that the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and I believe it: how they are to be thus raised, is not explained to me; nor am I sollicitous to know. And when you will condescend to demonstrate in what manner spirit acts upon matter; I will, in return for that secret, engage to illustrate any

the most abstruse and speculative doctrines in the Christian Religion. There cannot lie any real objection against it, because some of its speculative doctrines are exalted above human reason; so long as there is nothing contradictory, nothing repugnant to reason in the whole scheme of Christianity. So long as its practical duties are clear and obvious to the meanest capacities; matters of speculation it may include, which are beyond the reach of the most refined reasoners clearly to explain: probably intended as an inducement to men of learning and abilities, to employ their talents on a subject of so great and general concern. Man is by nature curious and aspiring; fond of what is abstruce, and apt to despise things that are plain and easy, merely because they are so: box endingered to be thus raifed, is not explained to me;

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Objects the more remote they lye from the pale of human knowledge, the more strongly

strongly engage our attention, and excite our ambitious refearches. Supposing Chriftianity comprized nothing but a fet of plain practical precepts; might not that be a reason for our fastidious nature to reject the divinity of it? And if fo, does not that very argument, which the Freethinker alledges against the divinity of the Christian Religion, tend ftrongly to enforce the truth of it? Surely I am not to refuse my affent to all speculative points, which the scanty line of human reason cannot reach; when it is required of me by the precepts of a religion, the divinity of which that same reason evinces by many other clear and incontestable proofs of the yourself to shoot, soit the necessity of it. And this you endeavour

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Human reason can never enable me to comprehend all mysteries; yet may it direct me, when there is sufficient grounds for my belief of them. In short, what is above my reason, it requires no great degree of credulity to believe on the authority of a divine

divine revelation: and to no point, that contradicts my reason, does scripture require my affent.

But then its practical precepts are fo far from falling under any charge of obscurity, are fo clear and obvious, that he who runs may read and comprehend them. And nothing but a strong affectation of singularity could have betrayed you into an affertion, to use your own words, so very extraordinary, as "that even its practical and moral precepts "must be likewise obscure "." And then without offering the shadow of an argument in support of so false and arbitrary an affertion, you gravely fet yourself to account for the necessity of it. And this you endeavour upon the strength of an hypothesis elsewhere laid down, viz. "That Omnipotence could not prevent moral evil from coming " into the world." Supposing Omnipotence above my reason, it requires no great degree

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could not have prevented Evil from coming into the world; you will however allow me, that he could have prevented some of the Evil that is introduced from coming into the world; for there are many Evils both natural and moral, that cannot be called effential to our nature: Upon your plan then be fo kind as to answer me why Omnipotence did not. Or draw your line, and tell me how much Evil Omnipotence could have prevented, and how much he could not. Could not Omnipotence for instance have prevented the introduction of many diseases, which till of late years never made their appearance in the world: Could not the same infinite Power have prevented the introduction of many unnatural crimes: neither the one, nor the other, appearing at all effential to human nature? Upon your plan\* how is the introduction of Evils, which Omnipotence could have prevented, ac-

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\* Origin of Evil, p. 89.

counted for? Why truly, by a fingular perfuration of your own, that there is fomething conducive to pleasure in the abstract nature of pain: a connection or dependance altogether inexplicable, nay, as you yourself acknowledge, inconceiveable\*.

In truth, to affert that Omnipotence cannot do a thing, which implies no contradiction; is a language, to which I am not accustomed, and know not how to conform. If, to affert that Omnipotence could not prevent moral Evil from coming into the world, be not setting bounds to Omnipotence, I know not what is. Omnipotence indeed cannot work contradictions: It cannot make a line at the same time a streight line and a curve; nor two things, at the same time, equal and unequal; it cannot at the same time exclude moral Evil from the world, and suffer it to be introduced. Yet this inability arises not

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<sup>\*</sup> Origin of Evil, p. 91, and 92.

from any limitted power in God, but from the necessity of things. He can make a curved line streight, and again, a streight line he can make a curve; by destroying the equality he can make two equal things unequal; and he could as easily have excluded moral evil from the world, as permitted it to be introduced. And the reason why it was suffered to be introduced, can never be, that it could not, but that it was better not to have been excluded.

However, granting the truth of your hypothesis, if your argument be reduced into form, we shall find it stand thus: "God, "who could not prevent moral evil from coming into the world, can much less be supposed able to extirpate it, when once introduced; therefore all precepts of moral virtue that he can communicate to man must be obscure:" or rather, in my humble opinion, therefore all such precepts must be imperfect: or indeed, if any conclu-

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fion can be properly drawn from these premises, it must be this, "that therefore all "precepts of virtue are absolutely vain." From hence may be observed, how inconclusive are the reasonings of ingenious men; when out of an affected singularity they give too great scope to the slight of their own vague fancies, and would appear to think more deeply than all the world that went before them: who, by endeavouring to soar too high in search of light, are most apt to lose themselves amidst the clouds of error.

The last general objection is, its want of policy; by which, as you inform us, is meant \*, that it does not prescribe rules for the government of states and empires; a point in which I have the satisfaction to find myself entirely of your opinion; neither does it establish rules, or afford us any directions

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Origin of Evil, p. 221,

for the conducting of fleets and armies. No man in his fenses ever supposed Christianity to comprehend all arts and sciences. Religion is one thing; policy is another. This prescribes regulations for the government of states and communities; and that professes to direct us in our duty to God, ourselves, and others.

ewgen-shepe, And indeed we fhall als

In general, policy is opposed to barbarism, as religion is to vice. All therefore that can be required of religion in
this view is, that it clash not with civil polity: and no defect can with any propriety
be imputed to it, because it includes no rules
of government; so long as its precepts go
hand in hand with such principles of policy,
as if strictly adhered to cannot fail to render
a people flourishing and great. And that
such is the nature of the religion under consideration, is one of those plain truths that
need no proof. A religion, the precepts of
which tend to make us affectionate parents,
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dutiful children, faithful friends, and worthy citizens, must promote virtue; and virtue, in spite of all refinements on Machiavelian policy, will make us brave. It has been prettily observed, that the Greeks and Romans expressed virtue and bravery indifferently by the same word: thereby implying the necessary and inseparable connection between them. And indeed we shall always find virtue and true courage in the same breast; they are congenial, and will ever be inseparable companions.

If it be indeed true, that Venality, Perfidy, Corruption, and a general encouragement of Profligacy and Vice, be the principles of government best calculated to promote the greatness and prosperity of a nation; the principles of Christianity are most

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Curius quid sentit, & ambo
Scipiadæ? Quid Fabricius, manesque Camilli?
Quid Cremeræ legio, & cannis consumpta Juventus,
Tot bellorum animæ?

Juv. Sat. II.

incompatible with the rules and principles of found policy. But on the contrary, if upon a strict and impartial enquiry it should appear, that in whatever state the duties of morality were most strictly observed, and these opposite principles were least prevailing; proportionably happier were the people, more formidable and independent the state: If the ruin of Athens, Sparta, and Rome be by their own historians ascribed to the malignant influence of fuch principles as those: as well the introduction of such principles, as the encouragement of them when introduced, must be impolitic. For it is an axiom as true in politics as in philosophy, " that a similarity of causes will produce " fimilar effects." bed but a bad vare

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From this view of things then it appears, that corruption, venality, and a total diffipation of manners, are not more contrary to the precepts of our religion, than the rules of found policy: consequently that religion,

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which in every article fundamentally combats those vices, and discourages them, must conduce to the good of the state. And therefore, though it does not immediately prescribe rules of government; yet as it cooperates with, and enforces principles of the best and furest policy, it may be deemed strictly political; and even on prudential and temporary motives, deferves to be encouraged. share find myo riads ad ad amo,

pant influence of fuel princ

Principles of government founded on an encouragement of vice, however warmly recommended, however occasionally useful to a weak or profligate ministry, must always be prejudicial to the state. Such arts are at best but a bad varnish to hide real defects, which, like the rouge on a faded face, by a present addition of false and adventitious charms deludes the eye of the fuperficial admirer, yet in reality poisons the beauties it is intended to enhance, and fecretly faps the conflitution.

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The judicious author of the Prefent State of Europe lays down this maxim: to use his own words; " As a point of very great " consequence in politics, That religious " principles are much more capable of fuf-" taining and supporting a firm and deter-" mined courage, than either political no-" tions or views of interest. Which should " induce statesmen to be very cautious of " running down religion in general; that " can never have any better effect, than cor-" rupting and dastardizing such as are delu-" ded into those loose sentiments: for this " is an infallible maxim, That he who does " not think himself accountable to God, " will never do any thing worthy of a man."

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Now upon supposition of a religion being defective in the four points above-mentioned, which you have established as the test of perfection; your conclusion is reasonable: that it must soon be corrupted. But I trust there is a religion, to which those marks of imperfection

ficials?

fection are unfairly attributed; I firmly believe the reformed religion of this land to be that religion, which was promulgated by Christ and his Apostles; and that this religion will appear to a candid and judicious mind able to bear the strictest examination; will acquire new lustre from the nicest scrutiny, and by fresh evidences of its truth, come forth with greater clearness, like real gold from the refiner's fire. Web animara" y can never have any better effect, than cor-

A writer, less fond of paradoxes than your felf, would never have fet himfelf to account for the necessary corruption of a religion upon principles, which, if any principles can, are most indisputably best calculated to preserve it pure. \* When a religion, fay you, is believed to be divine, it will be " received; when received, supported; and " to support it, an order of men must be maintained to explain its precepts, it must fooir be corrupted. But I trust there

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and enforce the practice of them: which " amounts to a national establishment." Why really these means do appear to the groffness of common sense most effectual for preserving the purity of a religion. A religion put upon this footing will be less liable either to be miftaken by ignorance, or wilfully perverted; than when trusted to every man's particular humour or fancy; and perhaps the partiality of fome darling vice. As a veffel, that has a pilot to direct its course is more likely to proceed aright, than one that is committed to the wildness and caprice of every wind that blows. In this manner thought the wifeft legislators in all ages; and to preserve the purity of that religion they effeemed best, they made it national. But common sense is fit only for common folks; and the wifeft legislators are mere dolts in reasoning, when set in competition with modern freethinkers. For it seems, as soon as a religion is thus established, it immediately becomes so intimately

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mately connected with the private interests of those who are maintained to propagate its doctrines, and guard its purity; that they will therefore — be the more likely to corrupt it.

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Excellent conclusion! No: before it becomes established, when the priests are paid according to the number of believers they can procure; bad men may then be tempted to make their religion subservient to their worldly concerns; may fay and unfay; and compass sea and land to gain one proselyte. But from the minute that religion becomes nationally established, these selfish motives for perverting it are at an end. He, whole office it is to preserve it pure, and who enjoys the advantages refulting from fuch an employ; labours against his own interest in attempting to corrupt it. Since as long as it continues in it's original purity, fo long may he reasonably hope to remain possessed of the emoluments annexed to his profef-

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fion. He must therefore be knave and fool, who either himself endeavours to corrupt it, or does not, as far as in him lies, prevent the finister views of those who would. For when once corrupted, it may with the more ease and success be attacked; and the more open it lies to attacks, in the more danger is it of being demolished: and with a new Form of Religion, a new Order of Priests must of courfe fucceed.

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Thus, Sir, have I followed you step by step, as far as the shadow of an argument is advanced. All beyond is declamation: Which if levelled, as is feemingly professed, against the church of Rome: let us take the scriptures for our guide, and we shall find that the doctrines of that church are not only not authorized by, but are incompatible with, the Gospel; and that therefore the doctrines, which it professes, are not

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So the pure limpid stream, when foul with stains Of rushing torrents, and descending rains, Works itself clear.

ADDISON.

And indeed the reformation of our religion carries with it, like its original propagation, the most evident stamp of divinity. To go about to prove either the one or the other, is beyond the purpose of this letter: which I cannot better conclude, than in the words of a learned and respectable writer,

writer, who on the case in point thus expressly declares himself\*. "The accidental occasion whereupon, the stender means whereby, the low and abject condition of the person by whom so good a work was set on foot, which in our advertiseis begets contempt, fills me with wonder, and is the very same objection the insolent Pagans sirst cast at Christ and his Disciples."

I have the honour to be, Sir, &c.

\* Sir Thomas Browne's Relig. Medici.

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# THREE DISCOURSES.



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DISCOURSES.

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## DISCOURSE I.

On CONSCIENCE.

### ROMANS II. 14. and 15.

When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do
by nature the things contained in the law,
these having not the law are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing
witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

To fuch extravagant height did the more rigid among the Jews, carry their contempt of the nations of the world; that they denied the Gentiles, who were K 4 without

without the law, to have either virtue or vice: whatever these did, they supposed was done by them not of choice or election, but by nature; and that therefore there was no reason why they should be rewarded for the one, or punished for the other. To this overweening notion of the Jews the paffage before us feems particularly to allude. Though; fays the apostle, they are destitute of the light of revelation, yet are they not without a rule of conduct; though they have no written law, they have a law graven on their hearts; by which in general cases they understand, and are conscious to themfelves what is good and evil, and therefore are just objects of falvation and condemnation; capable of rewards, if they observe this law, and liable to punishment, if they act against it. When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bear-

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ing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or excusing one another. Or perhaps rather, their thoughts the mean while respectively to themselves accusing or else excusing them. "Respectively to themselves," or "each one's to himself," seems in this place to be the proper import of the words perago announced.

From these words I will take occasion to enquire into the nature of the principle, by the apostle here stilled Conscience; which will lead me to consider in the second place, how far it is or is not a full and sufficient rule of action.

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Conscience, according to the common acceptation of the word, is understood to signify the judgment of a man's mind upon the moral rectitude or iniquity of his actions: but the checks or impulse of Conscience frequently precede any such operation of reason: some internal monitor frequently stops us short in the career of evil, and it is not till in consequence of such checks

checks, that we begin to look about us, to reason, and deliberate upon the fitness of what we are going to engage in. Conscience therefore should seem to imply something more than the usual explications attribute to it; something, that acts in concert with right reason, but is nevertheless independent of it. For if the case was otherwise, if Conscience was nothing else than the determination of reason in judging upon moral obligations; the most acute and subtle reasoner would always be the man of nicest and most feeling Conscience. Whereas the fact is frequently found to be the very reverse of this: reason often exerts itself with vigour and acuteness in men of corrupt morals and the most depraved appetites; where the voice of Conscience is filenced, or at best but faintly heard. And on the contrary, the conscience of the rude unlettered man will fometimes start at the commission of an evil action, which the man of refined reason will either overlook, or with the fubtle device of some nice distinctions gloss

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gloss over and palliate. Reason is the investigation of truth; Conscience, as the word feems etymologically to imply, an innate knowledge of it. Reason acts by making comparisons, forming judgment upon them, and by a long train of thought: Conscience operates instantaneously; without any laborious deductions of reason, directs, approves, and chides. It is as it were a ray of intuitive knowledge, that \* image of the Deity, after which man was originally created; a particle of divine light, which by the great and general depravation of human nature has fince the first fair original been much obscured, but is not even yet intirely extinguished. Those general conceptions of right and wrong, naturally ingendered in the human mind, and implicated with the

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<sup>\*</sup>Agreeably to what is here observed, the apossle stiles the revival of the old law of nature in the revelation of Jesus Christ, the renewal of the image of God in man. Col. iii. 10. Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.

frame and constitution of it, still influence it, though with various and diminished powers: they form that principle, which still continues to upbraid and rebuke a man with an evil action; and to impart the most sensible fatisfaction on the performance of a good one.

This principle then we may suppose was at first implanted in human nature, to affift our reason in the investigation of moral obligations; to bear witness to, and enforce it. And the united powers of Reafon and Conscience, as they were afforded us, whereby to regulate our conduct, and to direct us in the discharge of our duty, it is natural to suppose were abundantly sufficient to the end, for which our gracious Creator intended them. It is just to presume they were at the creation, and before the fall a fufficient standard and rule of action, had man duly attended to them. It is reafonable to conceive without indulging our fancy too far, that could any doubt have

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arisen in the mind, in regard to moral conduct, Reason would have distinguished fo readily, clearly and impartially, and the verdict of Conscience been so pure and untainted, fo forceful and express, that a just determination would have been as early as the proposal. If a man turn his eyes inward, and look impartially into his own breast, he will there perceive fomething putting him in mind of what he should or should not do, and afterwards accusing or else excusing him accordingly as he has or has not done it. And from what he feels passing within himfelf at this period, and in this corrupted state of our nature, he may in some measure conceive how clearly and forcibly this principle might act in its original vigour; before the violent inroads of passion, and the general spread of vice had reversed our nature; and reduced us from a fet of beings, created little inferior to angels, in many instances beneath the level of brutes.

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This was that principle, or, as the apos. tle terms it, law, which was originally afforded Adam, whereby to regulate his conduct; and for transgreffing against the dictates of which, he incurred the fatal punishment of his fin. It was to the virtuous heathen his monitor, his guide, his God. It was to every man, if fairly confulted, and duly attended to, the best of casuists, and the most faithful friend. But in a course of years vice made fo large strides into the world, that this law, though in the minds of fome few it might shine with distinguished lustre, with the generality of men became almost obliterated. In short, it was to be, that offences should come; and at length through the power of temptations, which the growing luxury of the world on every fide held out, through the prevalency of passions from within, the force of habit and example from without, and the almost infurmountable ascendency of inveterate prejudices, the original light of reason was so much

much obscured; and with it the voice of Conscience, that was accustomed to attend its decisions, either lulled asleep, or bribed to plead against it; that it became no easy matter in all cases to discern right from wrong, and good from evil: infomuch that men, even well-defigning men, were often betrayed to impose both on themselves and others with false notions, and correspondingly false and evil actions; to substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. The apostle himself declares, speaking in the character of a Jew, that he had not known fin but by the law, for he had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet. That is, we should not have known fin so certainly and precifely, in all its minute branches, and latent principles, but by the law. Scarcely should we have known that lust, or irregular defire, was a fin, except the law had so expressly forbidden it.

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Such was the state of mankind, when it pleased the Almighty to redeem them from the great ignorance and error into which they had fallen, by a revealed manifestation of his will. The original light of nature Moses was fent to revive, explain, and enforce. And a fuccessive train of divine delegates at different periods appeared in the world, gradually opening, and preparing mankind for that great revelation, which Christ himself came down from heaven to compleat; who therefore expressly affirms, that the end of his mission was to fulfill the law. Thus were the clouds of error dispersed, and Reason taught again to shine with more than original lustre: the law written in man's heart attending the refult of his will and actions with a voice of accufation or excuse.

Strange then that this handmaid of religion, this affiftant of Reason, should be so frequently feduced from the plain dictates both of the one and the other. The man

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of the world, as it is emphatically expressed, sears bis Conscience; and then mistakes its want of feeling for approbation. The bigot, on the other hand, maligns and persecutes all who in practice or opinion differ from him, and thinks or feigns to think he is therein doing God service. Thus from a misinformed Conscience proceeds the vain considence of the sceptic, and from the same corrupted source the pious rants of enthusiasm.

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In enquiring farther how this principle, calculated for the best and noblest purposes, becomes so liable to be perverted, and made subservient to the very worst, I shall be led to consider in the second place, how far it is or is not a full and sufficient rule of action.

opens the nublest prospect of happiness the

We supposed this law of the mind, written by God himself on the tablet of every man's heart, to have been originally full and explicit; sufficient to the purpose for which it was intended. We have also seen, that after the fall, this internal light became greatly obscured;

obscured; and in a course of years, human nature verging from bad to worfe, was at length only not extinguished. Hence appeared the necessity of some more certain and perfect standard to walk by, and the goodness of our Creator in reviving the faint and glimmering light of nature with an accession of light neither faint nor glimmering; which reforms the manners, while it enlarges the understanding; and, while it opens the noblest prospect of happiness hereafter, conducts us to it through ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace.

But if in this corrupt state of our nature, where the passions take the lead, men will argue, that because no revelation was at first made, and mankind were suffered to continue many ages without one, therefore no revelation could ever afterwards be necessary; that because Reason and Conscience were all the rule of conduct, that was at first given, and must consequently be supposed then to have

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been a sufficient rule, therefore it must ever remain to be so; and from such arguments are led to form their conduct on certain vague principles, which each proposes for himself, derived from the biass of natural inclination, or the prevailing force of example: the insufficiency of this rule, and impropriety of a conduct formed from it, will best appear from attending to their natural consequences.

Every man has his darling passion, which usurps a predominancy, and pleads for gratification and indulgence more powerfully than the rest. These are apt to dazzle our Reason, and seduce our Conscience; we miscall, we palliate, we overlook them. The man of pleasure for instance calls sensuality the dictates of nature; and obeys those dictates, as often as inclination prompts, and opportunity offers: and though he would start at avarice or ingratitude, his Conscience gives him no uneasiness in that point, to which his natural complection inclines him.

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The mifer stamps upon avarice the amiable name of frugality; and, while he fees luxury and fenfuality in their blackest colours, idolizes his mammon, and, though the enemy both of God and man, perceives nothing criminal in the worst of crimes. In these therefore and the like cases right and wrong are no longer the fame, but what is virtue with one man is with another vice; and the apparent fitness of things, upon which the man of reason is apt to lay so much stress, is continually altering and changing, as vague as men's various humours and caprice. And not only fo; but this rule of action shall to the same persons appear different at different times. The less progrefs men have made in vice, the more tender and delicate their consciences are: but when they have made a larger advancement in it, their Consciences by being frequently wounded become more callous, and the difference between right and wrong less fenfibly affects them. It is the same in the moral

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educa are ar moral, as in the natural world: moral honesty, like objects of fight, the farther we remove from it, is the more faintly and indistinctly discerned by us.

If therefore by the affiftance of our paffions and prejudices, and other external helps which the world will afford us, we can fo far blind our Reason, as firmly to persuade ourselves we may advance such and such lengths in vice without incurring guilt, and innocently indulge ourselves in those peculiar vices to which we are most inclined, provided we keep clear of others to which perhaps we have no inclination at all; Reafon thus dazzled, and the passions triumphant, we shall never hear the faintest whifpers of Conscience. Indeed the principle, we might call Conscience, thus biaffed becomes no Conscience at all; but rather fancy, humour, or prejudice, taken up from education, interest, or example; all which are apt to be frequently mistaken for Con-

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fcience; and under that fair and feemly difguife to betray men of weak judgment, strong passions, and heated imaginations, into the greatest extravagancies of absurdity and vice.

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To evince the danger of such mistakes, and the necessity there is of being well informed how far our Conscience may be depended upon, or not; it is sufficient to observe, that whatever notions we may entertain of virtue and vice, their nature is nevertheless immutable, and God's judgment of them the same: and therefore we shall be accountable for the practice of them as they are, not as a perverted Conscience may represent them to us.

What is apt to palm itself upon the mind for Conscience, I observed is oftentimes no more than the prepossession of some passion, or prejudice. And indeed were we nicely to investigate the nature of a salse and erroneous Confcience, and through all its devious turns and windings trace it up to its proper fource; we should ever find it ultimately flowing from some prevailing paffion, from interest or example. Each of these, its charms respectively adapted to the mind it possesses, pleads with eloquence so. palatable and prevailing, that Conscience is vanquished, and this new minion usurps both its place and office: fo that however we may deceive ourselves, it is not in this case the judgment of Conscience that acquits or condemns, but fome vicious propenfity or prejudice, that over-rules that judgment: And Conscience, where it is not entirely filenced, thus baffled and superseded in one quarter, changes the attack, and exerts all its power against the opposite vices; where no passion or prejudice prevails against it. Hence it is that we oftentimes observe a man laying great stress upon some peculiar virtues, or rather perhaps some external forms of virtue, exclusive of the rest, and proportionably vehement L 4

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hement against particular vices. And hence too we may perhaps in some measure account for that observation, neither uncommon, nor unjust; that those who make the greatest parade of Conscience, are frequently found in reality to have the least of it. A man may fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all that he bath; but if he be at the same time proud, censorious, and uncharitable, he may speak peace to his Conscience, and thank God that be is not as other men are: but we may collect from our Saviour's remark, that be speaks peace where there is no peace.

Conscience is always uniform; it comprehends virtue in all its branches: and though it may not be fufficient at all times to guard and fecure us against every attack of vice; it will never lay out its powers in securing us against particular vices, and leave us exposed to, and even countenance the rest. It will never cease to disquiet and molest us, till we cease to sin: nor in complaisance to paffion

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passion ever impose upon us in a fair stattering disguise. Would Herod, for Instance, who knew John to be a just man and holy: who heard him gladly in some things, and paid great regard to his advice and direction, would he have judged himself obliged to sacrifice this good counsellor, this just, this holy man to a rash unguarded promise: unless Conscience had imposed upon him in the harlot dress of homour? In consequence of his solemn promise, and regard to the respectable company before whom it was made, he thought himself bound in honour and Conscience to commit murder, with the most aggravating circumstances.

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I might in farther confirmation of what has been in general advanced, descend to other particular instances, in which the secret springs of this salse principle would appear as clearly laid open, as in the case just mentioned: might I not presume the insufficiency of Conscience, as a rule of action,

Since to excellent and compleat a fyfiem

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tion, let and hindered as we are by the incumbrances of fin, and the temptations that on all fides fo powerfully follicit us, fully evinced; as also the necessity of some fixed standard, whereby to regulate a principle, otherwise so little to be depended on, so very vague and vain. And, after what has been already premised, little more need be aded to point out the criterion intended. Revealed religion being now what the law of nature originally was, we may in every case depend upon Conscience, regulated by the revelation which God has been pleased to make to us, fairly and rationally interpreted, to be a full and sufficient rule of action. Since fo excellent and compleat a system of morality has Christ left us; that there is no duty which we ought to practife, nothing we ought to refrain from, but what is there clearly and expressly commanded or forbidden. It is from thence, and thence only, that Conscience is to take its measures: fo that as every man is bound to walk accord-

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ing to his own Conscience, every man's Concience is equally bound to the direction of God's word.

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a said of has produces a leider of bains It may be objected, that if divine revelation be the only full and sufficient standard by which Conscience is to be regulated; what will become of those, and how are they to act, whom this day-spring from on high hath never visited: to which the words under confideration are a fufficient answer: Though the heathen have not the written law of God, still have they an universal law written in their hearts; which, though less clear and forceful than the other, is still sufficient in general cases to direct them in the discharge of their duty; though less purity and holiness will be required of them, and proportionably less will their merit or demerit be, this their law is both fo clear and forceful as to render them accountable for their actions; justly liable to punishment, and through the applied merits of Christ, capable of rewards. The

The fum of what may be practically inferred from the above discourse is, that since our Creator hath stamped upon the human mind so faithful a monitor, and so sure a guide, if properly regulated and duly attended to, as Conscience; it is both our interest and our duty, carefully to follow its dictates, and submissively attend to its reproofs. A strict regard to it will, by little and little wean us from our sins, by the uneasiness and remorse \* it will on the commission of vice create to us. For it is difficult to sigure to ourselves a more unhappy man than him, who has a just sense of virtue, yet whose virtue is continually yielding to the

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<sup>\*</sup> This uneafiness, and remorse of Conscience, as it is called, which we feel upon the Commission of an evil action, affords no bad argument in support of the Freedom of Will and Action. For why should we feel any uneasiness in consequence of an action, to which we were necessarily determined? Remorse is a temporary punishment, and oftentimes a very severe one. But the act must be free and voluntary, else it is no crime; and it must be a crime, else it is not in strict justice punishable.

blandishment and charms of vice: whose life is a constant succession of sinning and repenting; who hates himself for being the thing he is, yet wants resolution to become otherwise. But when the voice of Conscience is silenced, when the passions, originally formed in subservience to reason have once broke from their allegiance, and usurping dominion annul and abrogate the law written in our hearts; the strongest barrier against the inroads of vice is demolished, and no other defence of sinking virtue will be left than worldly interest, or the dread of worldly shame.

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Seeing then that rebellion against this law is so uneasy to us, and inattention to it so dangerous; will it not abundantly recompence to us all our pains, to labour to preserve this principle pure and undefiled; to exercise ourselves to have a Conscience void of offence towards God and towards man? Which is nothing less than what our Saviour in other

other words calls our duty to God and our neighbour; and which he affirms to comprise the whole law, and the prophets. That this be our care, as it will be our comfort here, and our happiness hereafter, may God of his infinite mercy grant.

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## DISCOURSE II.

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On INSPIRATION.

Preached on WHITSUNDAY.

#### 2 TIMOTHY III. 16.

All scripture is given by Inspiration of God.

A Religion, that like the Christian fundamentally opposes every kind of vice, must necessarily draw upon it the ill will of all such as are engaged in vicious pursuits; accordingly the quiver of insidelity has been drained, and no shadow of occasion neglected by the sensualist to cavil at its doctrines, and

if possible rid his conscience of so galling a yoke. Divine revelation has been considered as an idle dream of enthusiasm, all notions of Inspiration disputed against, and because there have been many false pretences made to it, the reality of the thing has been called in question: Which argues just as good reasoning, as it would be, to dispute the reality of virtue, because there are in the world so many hypocrites.

By Inspiration we understand a supernatural conveyance of divine truths to the mind; which, in attestation of the reality of it, hath been ever attended with a display of miraculous powers. The particular Inspiration which we this day commemorate, was evinced in the extraordinary profusion of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles assembled at the great feast of Pentecost; and was sufficiently displayed to the wondering assembly by the various Gifts of Tongues, with which the Apostles were instantaneously instructed.

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The fact is by the facred historian thus simply related.

At the general feast of Pentecost, when the Jews were affembled from all quarters of the world at Jerusalem; a surprising sound, like that of a mighty rushing wind, filled the house where the apostles were sitting: whilft \* a kind of fiery tongues, as proper fymbols of those gifts with which they were then inspired from on high, appeared over each of them. And the effects, that immediately followed, were fully answerable to those figurative resemblances, for they were instantaneously filled with the Holy Ghost; and expressed themselves as the spirit dictated in fuch variety of languages, that they could readily converse with the Parthian, the Mede, and Elamite, in short with the natives of every country in Europe, Asia, and Africa; with each in the language of that Country in which he was born.

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Against the truth of this fact, however extraordinary it may appear, there can be objected no implication of impossibility or contradiction. There are two ways, by which a knowledge of different languages may be acquired; ordinary and extraordinary. The ordinary way of acquiring this knowledge of languages, is by conversing frequently with those who understand them; by long study and application: The other, and extraordinary way, of attaining to it, is by an immediate divine conveyance. And who can doubt, but that He, who furnished us with faculties capable of learning different languages in length of time and by dint of application, can, whenever he fees fit, convey to us the same degree of knowledge instantaneously. However, there are not wanting those, who suppose all notions of Inspiration, of sepernatural knowledge and power communicated to Man, to be false and vain Leaving therefore the fact above related to stand or fall with Inspiration in general, the

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principal objections that have been lately urged against the truth and reality of this, shall in the sequel of this discourse be considered: And in order to remove those objections I will endeavour first to evince that there are certain criteria, by which an inspired person may himself know assuredly when he is inspired; as also that there are certain means by which this knowledge may be communicated to others who are uninspired: and will adly examine the inspiration of the apostles of Christ according to the rules laid down.

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It cannot be denied, that He, who established the laws of nature, can, whenever He sees sit, supersede those laws: and if we can assign a cause worthy of such extraordinary interposition of the Deity, we must believe He will do it. If then the promulgation of certain divine truths, that concerned not the interests of this or that society of men, but on which depended the good and happiness

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of the whole race of mankind, could not be rendered effectual, without fome supernatural display of divine power; we have a cause or motive demanding and worthy of the effect, whose reality it is here proposed to establish. And confidered in this view, we may venture to pronounce the possibility of Inspiration. True it is, that the vain illusions of distempered zeal may impose upon a weak judgment and heated imagination; and mifrepresent the wild flights of enthusiasm for holy raptures of Inspiration. But still though one person should fancy himself to be inspired, when he is not; this affects not the possibility of another person's feeling and knowing that he is inspired, when he really is so. It has however been afferted, by the adverfaries of revelation, that no one can know affuredly that he is inspired; or, granting that he was inspired, yet it is utterly impracticable that he should ever produce indubitable credentials of a divine commission to others, who are uninspired. Which leads

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me to confider, as was proposed in the first place, whether certain criteria might not be discovered; which would infallibly prove the reality of Inspiration both to the inspired person himself, and to others.

If we allow that God can in particular cases, and for special reasons, enlarge the powers of human agents, in an extraordinary manner; may we not also believe that he can communicate to the persons thus inspired fuch incontestable evidence of their Inspiration, as shall with regard to themselves place the truth of the fact beyond all doubt? Whoever confiders the vast power and influence which He who formed the foul must have upon it, must believe that he can afford fuch clear and strong conviction of any truths he shall be pleased extraordinarily to communicate, can give fuch a vigorous perception, can accompany his own revelations with fuch fufficient proofs of the reality of them; that the persons charged with M 3 them,

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Let us suppose a man of ordinary understanding; or, to place the matter in a stronger light, an ignorant illiterate person to feel his mind on a fudden opened, his understanding illumined, and his ideas enlarged; must he not conclude such an effect to be some way supernatural? If he perceives within himfelf a knowledge of certain facts, which perhaps till then he never thought on; or at most never thought on, but with perplexity and obscurity: if without any nice disquisitions, any laborious refearches he fees, by a kind of intuitive knowledge, truths, which before he was not able to ascertain by any deductions of reason; if it be further given him, to pierce into the dark womb of time, and there discover productions maturing into birth; must he not conclude this sudden acquisition of knowledge to be supernatural: that is, must be not conclude wins.

conclude himself to be inspired? To give objections their full claim; let it be granted that on weak and diftempered minds fancy may operate thus strongly, that all this may be effected by enthusiasm. Yet when this enlargement of the intellectual powers is likewise attended with the evidence of the senses; when to this fancied knowledge is added a power of working miracles: when the man possest of wisdom and discernment, which might feem too wonderful aad excellent for mere man to attain to, also performs things which are beyond the ordinary operations of nature: when he can converse with people of all nations, in languages which before he never heard, and finds himfelf understood by them; when sickness and disease fly at his touch; when he can fay to the lame, walk, and he walketh, and to the blind, receive thy fight, and he receiveth it: the person so inspired may rest well asfured, that this is no vain illusion, but a real Inspiration; God himself as it were by figns M 4

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figns and miracles thus fetting his feal to the truth and reality of it.

These are the means, and sufficient means they feem to be, whereby a person may judge whether he himself be inspired, or not. And the last argument alledged for this purpose, viz. the power of working miracles, is no weak one towards the conviction of others. But as very uncommon things may have been effected by natural powers, as we cannot exactly determine upon the powers that fuperior spirits may be permitted to exercise: before miracles can be absolutely pronounced divine, they must have some good design to ferve, fome end worthy of the great cause to which they are ascribed. And what cause upon earth fo worthy of God's interpolition, as that of virtue and religion? If then the miracles be wrought in confirmation of the purest and compleatest system of morality that can be conceived; we may judge of the divinity of the miracles from the end they

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are intended to serve: The authority of those precepts may be estimated by the powers evinced in the promulgation of them; and, as our Lord Himself argues, the persons thus charged may be believed for the work's sake. To suppose a person himself inspired, incapable of proving the divinity of his commission to others who are uninspired, is an hypothesis almost too absurd to need confutation.

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Can we suppose that God would reveal to any one truths, the knowledge and belief of which are essential to the happiness of mankind; without investing the person so charged with powers sufficient to convince the reasoning and unprejudiced part of the world of the divinity of his commission? To grant the heaven-favoured prophetess the gift of Inspiration, but at the same time shut up the hearts of the persons most concerned in those prophecies against all considence and belief in them; may form a pretty sable for Pagan theology

theology, but will never find a place in the creed of a rational Christian. Such a notion degrades the Deity. The manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal. The extraordinary gifts of Inspiration are conferred on no man for his own private advantage, honour, or fatisfaction; but for the general good and benefit of others. But what general good or benefit could possibly accrue from any one's Inspiration; if he could convince nobody of the divinity of his commission, and in consequence of it, of the excellence of those doctrines which he was delegated to promulge, and of the degree of affent that was therefore due to them? Hence it appears, that the abfurdity of fuch a supposition is itself a sufficient confutation of it.

Another corroborative argument, for ! mention it not as fingly fuch, whereby the reality of the Inspiration may be made appear to others, is the fuccess this supposed fystem

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fystem shall meet with. If it fall to the ground with the first preachers, no farther good being discerned to proceed from it; we may affure ourselves of the falsity of it: for a religion divinely instituted, must necessarily be divinely supported. And if a religion be attended with a fuccess infinitely above the flender means that human affiftance afforded; this is a corroborative argument of the truth of it: though an argument of little force taken fingly. For a false religion God may permit to flourish; either to keep alive a zeal, in those who are so happy as to be engaged in the profession of the true one; or as a stumbling block for such as stop their ears against the voice which whispers joy and comfort, which charmeth ever fo wisely; or for the punishment of those, who if they hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, yet with fo cold and languid wishes receive the word, that their thoughts and actions are at perpetual variance; or for some other wise and good purpose,

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In short, as no one can limit the powers of Omnipotence, where no contradiction is implied; no one can with any pretence of reason deny the possibility of Inspiration. And by those general rules, above alledged, to evince the truth of the Inspiration, both to the inspired person himself, and to those who are uninspired, it seems not only possible but easy to distinguish real Inspiration from enthusiasm or imposture. According to these established rules then we will, as was in the second place proposed, examine the Inspiration of the Apostles of Christ.

And first, here are a set of ignorant illiterate men, taken from their manual occupations; who voluntarily renounce all wordly comforts, all ease, and satisfaction, and take upon them to reform the world: and to the confusion of the wise men of the world pub-

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lish doctrines of such height and importance, as the greatest reach of human philosophy was never able to extend to; the refurrection of the dead, the doctrines of a future state. and the final retribution of rewards and punishments. Nor were these high important truths ushered into the world with the weakness and infufficiency, the madness and enthusiasm of field preachers; they were supported and enforced by miracles, by extraordinary figns, and many wonderful works. These men like their great master, gave fight to the blind, ftrength to the lame, and healed all manner of disease among the people. The consciousness of having their minds illumined with fuch knowledge as this, attended with the incontestible evidence of the fenses, must to the persons themselves be a full and fufficient assurance of the real divinity of their commission: and by these marks the apostles of Christ were so thoroughly convinced of their own Inspiration, that they laid down their lives in confirmation

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firmation of it. Which circumstance affords another, and that no inconfiderable argument for the conviction of others.

To this end however, agreeably to the rules before laid down, besides the power of working miracles, it is necessary that the drift and design of those miracles be good; that is, that the doctrines, in support and confirmation of which they are wrought, be of so pure a nature, as may challenge the divine interpolition, and not be imputable to the agency of dæmons or evil spirits. Accordingly the utmost efforts of human reafon, affifted with all the advantages of learning and experience were never able to frame a fystem of morality, so aptly calculated for universal practice, so well adapted to every capacity, so pure, so perfect, as the religion of Jesus Christ. Indeed the perfect purity that Christianity requires of its professors has been the greatest, if not only source of those cavils which men of libertine principles have laboured

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laboured to raise against it. The last concurrent circumstance mentioned as necessary to evince the divinity of any religion, is the fuccess of it. And truly the apostles wrought no greater miracle, than the amazing progress of Christianity affords us. It was promulgated by a fet of indigent, destitute, ignorant, illiterate men. It comprized a fyftem of morality, utterly destructive of vice and vanity, directly opposite to men's lusts and passions, to the folly and pleasurable purfuits of this world: and confequently most obnoxious to those who most enjoyed such gratifications; which were in general those who had it most in their power to enjoy them. It was therefore not only unsupported by the countenance of power and authority, but most violently opposed by those whose exalted stations gave them opportunity of doing the greatest harm to it. No fword was drawn in its fupport, nor had it the rudeness of Arabs to practise upon. No darling pleasure, no choice sensuality was referved

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ferved to comfort its professors for the loss of the rest. The strenuous affertors of Christianity had no temporal rewards to look for; no recompence to spirit them up under all the various difficulties they had to encounter, but what was from above: they were not made captains of hundreds, and captains of thousands. The more bold, the more indefatigable they were in propagating the doctrines they were charged with; the more cruelly they were perfecuted. They were spoken against every where, they met with nothing but contempt, calumny, imprisonment, and death in all its most formidable shapes. Yet in spite of all these difficulties, in spite of all opposition, so amazingly did this religion flourish and prevail; that in a short time princes became its patrons and protectors, and queens its nurfing mothers. And at this day the most polished parts of the globe, however loose particulars may be in practice, profess Christianity.

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From this representation nude and impartial, I think it evidently appears, that there are certain criteria by which a real Inspiration may be diftinguished from all false pretensions to it; and that the Inspiration of the apostles of Christ doth in every circumstance exactly coincide with the rules for this purpose established. If from hence we turn our eyes to the impostures of an eminent pretender to divine Inspiration; we shall find, that a general defectiveness in every rule above laid down abundantly proclaims the falfity of fuch his pretentions. Confider the cunning infinuating Mahomet, making his religion subserve the most ambitious views; engaging in his projects men of equal art and fubtlety with himself, and rewarding their faithful services with temporal honours and wealth: confider his ridiculous pretences to miracles unattested, and his final appeal to the sword for conviction; and lastly consider the nature of his doctrines, which not only permitted, but even enjoined the the most inordinate fenfualities.

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fenfualities: and from hence may be collected the very great distinction that lies between real Inspiration and all false pretensions to it.

Represent to yourselves on the other hand, the religion of nature, the darling idol of the Deift; fee him proftrating himfelf to the flump of a tree, and faying to a carved stone, Thou art my God: attend her votaries to their religious ceremonies, and you will find acted there the groffest obscenities; approach their altars, and you will find them stained with human facrifices; you will find throughout the veriest works of hell done under a blind pretence of pleasing heaven: and from hence may be learned the very great necessity there was for a revelation. Let the man of reason think highly as he will of this principle; yet these were the wretched effects of unaffifted reason. if modern Freethinkers have feen more deeply into, and argued more confiftently upon

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upon religious matters than the antient heathens did; they can justly ascribe this to nothing, but the strong lights which Christianity hath reflected on the subject.

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To conclude therefore with a practical reflection, fince God hath graciously condescended to afford us such a light, how can we pay too great attention to it! With what profound reverence ought we to regard the precepts and doctrines, that Christ hath committed to us, the lively oracles of God! Blinded by ignorance, or prejudiced by our lusts, we may cavil at the doctrines, and refuse to obey those precepts; but it is imposfible that we should either amend the one, or better ourselves by refusing obedience to the other. We may torture and wrest them; but we are forewarned, it will be to our own destruction. Let us rather with open hearts receive the religion of Christ; not barely as it is a national religion, though with honest men that would be a motive for N<sub>2</sub> acquiacquiescence in it; but as a religion most unembarrassed with difficulties, most pure, most perfect: a revelation most strongly confirmed by unbiassed reason, most pregnant of blessings here, and exhibiting to us the nobless prospect of eternal happiness hereafter.

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## CONCIO III.

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## ECCLUS. VII. 30.

Hoc tantum inveni; quod Deus bomines perfectos creavit, ipsi autem ratiocinia plurima invenerunt.

TERRARUM hic noster orbis, & quicquid in orbe viret, quicquid ultra hujusce mundi fines aut oculus assequi, aut mens deprehendere possit, Deum optimum maximum arguit: tanta sapientia, tanta ubique patet Potentia. O orbem scelina N 4 cem,

cem, fummi artificis, omnibus absolutum numeris, opus; cui herba quæque levissima, cui quicquid ayium pecudumque usquam invenitur, aut pulchritudinem aut usum suppetit! O hominum fælicissimum genus; cui tot utilia, tot perpulchra serviunt! At longe aliter se res habet: tot tamque præclara et benevolentiæ et sapientiæ Dei argumenta malum multiforme inquinat. Morborum numerofa cohors, nec arte nec medicina depellenda, humana corpora obsidunt; animos pravi affectus deturpant : durâ adeo lege, vivitur, ut fælicissimus ille, qui minus miser.

Quo fonte derivata mala hæc, ut dicuntur, tam naturalia, quam moralia, vitam humanam miseriis ærumnisque obruerunt: quo pacto homines fœlicitate exciderunt, quos fœlicitati percipiendæ in lucem evocavit Deus; et olim et nunc temporis varié contenditur: nodus hercle Deo vindice dignus. Hinc alii, quales funt Manichæi, omnipotentià Dei denegatà, dæmonem alterum, po-

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tentem quidem fed malefuadum et maleficum fingunt: cui ordinis perturbatio cordi est. Quodcunque boni aut excogitavit, aut effecit Deus; ut hoc inquinet, illud ut missum faciat, hic malorum opifex pro viribus ufque laborat: et artis chymicæ ratione quafi inversâ, ut ex optimo quoque malum eruat, huic labor atque opus est. Alii potentiam Dei summam esse agnoscunt, providentiam ejus omnino tollunt: Deum talem designant, cujus majestati rerum humanarum moderamen ne minime conveniret; cujus fœlicitas ne perfecta et continuata fieret, hujusmodi curæ quam maxime obstarent. " Est natura Dei," uti ab iis fictam, uti a Lucretio depictam accepimus,

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"Semota ab nostris rebus, sejunctaque longe,

"Nec bene promeritis capitur, nec tangi-

Ipsâ Dei existentiâ sublatâ, nodum alii audacite daciter resolverunt. Si Deus sit, sicut hi ratiocinantur, ab operibus fuis eur malum haud procul amovit? aut nequivit fane, aut noluit. Vel potestas ejus, vel benevolentia est finita: Ens vero, quoquo modo finitum, nequit esse vere et absolute Deus. Ratiocinio igitur si huic assentiamur, rerum lucidus ordo nullo moderamine certo geritur; fed fors omnia versat. Hisce variis de mali origine hypothefibus accedit altera; quæ naturam humanam ita effe comparatam affirmat, ut a malo separari et sejungi humanitatis son omnino nequeat. Veri specie adeo inani delinitis matum quafi de effentià hominis effe videtur; et crimina quæque misericordià potius, quam pænå digna putantur. Hinc, non me malum! fed me miserum! clamare quisque in promptu habet: hinc neminem confitentem habemus reum; dum peccata quifque non sua deflet, sed quæ humana parum cavit natura. Hominum vero crimina in naturam humanam dum temere transferant; ne in autho-

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rem naturæ culpa ad extremum recidat, isti parum cavent philosophi.

Opinionum, quas supra memoravimus, prioribus tribus jam prætermiss, ad refellendam hanc posteriorem, quippe quæ neotericis quibusdam præcipue arridet, sententiam potius accingor.

Hominum genus e creatoris summi manibus, adeo appetens mali, adeo imporens benò beatèque vivendi, adeo impersectum evassiste singunt hujusce sententiæ propugnatores; ut innocentiæ persectæ et sælicitatis status nec suerit unquam, nec sore poterit. Si vero Moseos de Statu Paradistaco, atque autorum ethnicorum de ætate aurea, scriptis quid veri insit; philosophorum istorum hypothesis reipsa resellitur: et, ratiocinii sui fundamine sublato, quodcunque super extruitur cassum, ruit. Statum igitur naturæ insocentiæ et sælicitatis esse statum, ac sorte tali beatum hominum genus osim sloru-

iffe,

isse, hac in concione contenditur: cujus tripliciter divisæ hæc norma servabitur.

Quid de hominum conditione primâ, mundi ætate, in facris scripturis traditum accepimus, primò exponendum est.

Auctores profanos, tum poetas, tum philosophos, eadem suffragantes deinde proferam.

Hæc tandem dogmata de Statu Paradifiaco, ab antiquissimis scriptoribus tradita, rationi esse consentanea tertiò comprobabitur.

Sermonis itaque hujusce prædictam mihi servanti normam, quid de hominum conditione, mundi ætate prima, scriptura sacra tradit, primò investigandum est. Fabricationem ¿ξημεςστην depingens Moses \*, hæc re-

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<sup>\*</sup> In ista narratione quædam esse parabolica, nonnulli existimant: alii etiam sermonem totum exemplar artisiciosum esse volunt ad res veras explicandas; nempe naturæ primæ statum Paradisiacum, & ejusdem degenerationem, necnon humani generis novitatem. Alii quasi

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fert; "Deus omnia, quæcunque; fabricaverat, afpexit; et ecce omnia bona:" omnia nempe ad affequendum finem, cujus gratià creabantur, in se sat potestatis habuerunt. Innocentiam primœvam, et mali originem historicus idem divinus planè et enucleatè exponit. Porro ratio vitæ, quam parentes primi agebant, morum simplicitatem et securitatem ab innocentia omnino ortam, hisce verbis tradita, luculenter designat. "Ambo erant nudi Adam et uxor ipsius, neque illos pudebat." \* Naturam nempe ducem et magistram secuti, nec labis ullius conscii, nulla vestium involucra quærebant; neque iis vitio suiti nuditas, dum imago ista

quasi historiam summa side dignam, narrationem totam sensu omnino ad literam expresso complectuntur. Explicatio quænam sit verissima, hic loci non investigandum duco: talem, qualis contenditur, extitisse statum, degenerationem postea contigisse, sententiæ utriusque propugnatores pariter agnoscunt.

Dei

<sup>\*</sup> Historici facri sententiæ isti hæc Platonis conferatur. Γυμνοι δε και αςτεωτοι θυεαυλευτες τα πολλα ενεμοντο, το γας των ωςων αυτοις αλυπον εκεκεατο.

Dei, forma humana elucessens, peccaro intaminata stetit. Neque his folis claufulis Statûs Paradifiaci dogma innititur: scripturis facris excerptæ, femtentiæ aliæ proferri poffent, que creationis mundi historiam, ficut a Mose traditam accepimus, non folum innuere, fed plane affirmare naturæ humana perfectionem, fatis arguunt. Innocentia n fælicitatis primorum parentumfidem apudjudæos fummam valuisse hinc præcipue siquet; quod Apostoli de sorte istà beata, traditionibu acceptà, Mose luculenter exposità, prophetarum monitis munitâ, mon obscure, dubitanter, et quali ambagibus, fumma ven cum fiducia loquuntur: quippe quod pro certo usque habebatur. Sententias huc spectantes, in novo fœdere passim dispersas, ut plurimas omittam; hæc Pauli verba exemplum ampliffimum præbent. "Sicut um homine peccatum in mundum introivit, mor quoque peccati causa, &c." ac in eodem capite paulum infra, " ficut hominis unius inobedientia plurimi fiebant peccatores, &c." Quibus

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Quibus ex claufulis Apostolum, ut satisfactionem Christi omnes complecti omnis ætatis homines probaret, fœlicitatis primæ jacturam non modo nudè et simplicitèr affirmare constat; hoc vero ex dogmate, quasi re cognità et universum concessa posito, ad alias probationes progreditur. Sed in re apertiffimâ diutius cur immorandum? Tum fœlicicitatem primævam, tum fælicitatis istius jacturam, feriptura facra si alibi usque taceret; ad utramque probandam prædictæ folæ clausulæ abunde sufficient, et quasi vim habent demonstrationis. Sententias ergo supra memoratas hæc, de quâ jam concionamur. " Hoc tantum inveni, quod homines perfectos effinxit Deus; ipsi autem ratiocinia plurima invenerunt."

Claufulis istis cæterisque plurimis, quæ, idem spectantes, in scripturis sacris inveniuntur, sibi invicem collatis; hæc dogmata summatim exinde sequi habentur. Mundi origine prima homines, uti alia singula sapientissimi

entissimi et omnipotentis auctoris opera, per fecti creabantur. Appetitus fingulos, ad fælicitatem affequendam, ad promovendam virtutem unice spectantes, et mutuo et amicè conspirantes, ratio gubernatrix administravit. Satis et ad fœlicitatem et ad virtutem valebant: dum hanc excolant, illa fruuntur: hâc læså, illa amittitur. Libera benè beatèque vivendi datur potestas; nulla imponitur necessitas: cuique incoacta sua stetit voluntas. Minus morigeros denique se præbuerunt, imperium Dei repugnarunt, justaque detrectarunt: Inobedientiæ fuæ pænas luebant. Hinc malum oritur; et vires acquirens eundo, longè latèque ingruit. Hoc fonte derivata, clades omnigena ubique diffunditur; hinc, quicquid vitam humanam miseram aut infuavem reddit, quale quale infit amari, id totum accipit; serosque in nepotes defluens, contagii instar, naturam humanam commutasse videtur; immo, si fas sit vera loqui, commutavit.

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Sensu scripturæ sacræ de prima hominum conditione ita breviter exposito; quid de eâdem autores profani conscripserunt, servato proposito, proximè investigandum est: rerum enim antiquissimarum, quæ in literis facris continentur, historiam, quamvis plerumque obscuram, apud omnes gentes remansisse constat. Cumque concionis nostræ norma claufulas ex scriptoribus ethnicis plures, quàm in hujusce generis scriptis commendat usus, proferri postulet; apud hunc confessium me excusatum iri spero. A philosophis igitur ac historicis, quippe queis major quam poetis fides habetur, initium sumendum duco. Quos inter præcipuus Plutarchus, philosophus idem et historicus, regionis cujusdam, notis Paradisi distinctæ, nomine infularum beatarum defignatæ, defcriptionem exhibet; cui orbis terrarum portiuncula omnino nulla nunc temporis convenit \*. "Imbres, inquit ille, rari et amæni

<sup>\*</sup> Ομβροις δε χρωμεναι μετριοις ςπανιως, τα δε πλειστα πτευμασι μαλακοις και δροσοδολοις, ου μονον αρουν και Φυ-

hic loci decidunt; dum venti molliter spirantes, et rore quasi alati, insulam pervagentur: quibus efficitur, ut studio et labore nullo eliciti, omnigenæ herbæ fructusque jucundissimi suapte nascantur." Descriptioni huic sententiam proxime sequentem historicus insuper addit. "\* Adeo ut sides usque ad barbaros perlata sirma est, illic campos esse Elysios, et beatorum sedes quas Homerus decantavit." Hinc de Paradiso, sive beatorum sede quid sensit Plutarchus, quid etiam barbari sensere, liquet.

Eadem fere, quæ de infulis fortunatis Plutarchus, de infula Toprobana afferit Diodorus Siculus: hoc infuper addito, nempe quod hujusce regionis incolæ expertem mor-

πον αυτοφυή φερουσιν, αποχρωντα πλήθει και γλυκυτήτι Βοσκειν ανευ πονών και πραγματείας σχολάζοντα δήμον. Plut. in Vit. Sert

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<sup>\*</sup> Ωστε μεχει των βαεβαεων διιχθαι πιστιν ισχυεων, αν τοθι το πλυσιον πεδιον, και την των ευδαιμονων οικησιν, η Ομηςος υμνησεν. Ibid.

borum vitam agebant. Nec prætermittendum duco, quod de morte Tobrobanitarum historicus idem tradit; utpote sententiam haud omnino isti dissimilem, quam scriptorès quidam Christiani de morte, vel potius e vità excessu, in statu paradisiaco si homines usque permansissent, statuere.\* "Duplex apud eos nascitur herba; cui si quis indormiat, cruciatûs omnis et doloris expertem mors grata suavisque supervenit." Sententia ista Diodori Mosaicæ arboris vitæ explicationem fortasse verissimam præbet; quippe qua ab origine narratio illa primitus derivatur. Mors, si historico sacro sidem habeamus, non humanitatis conditio, sed peccati pœna, plane constituta fuit. Arbori vitæ igitur talem quid vetat inesse vim, qualis fructum ejus gustanti transitum facilem atque suavem ad immortalitatem conciliaret.

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<sup>\*</sup> Φυεσθαι γας αυτοις διφυη βοτανην, εφ ης οταν τις κοιμηθη, λεληθοτως και απονως προς υπνον κατενεχθεις αποθηςκει. Diod. Sic. lib. 2.

Paradisum quendam in Africa situm Procopius fingit; fontibus amœnis irrigatum, fylvis ornatum, viridantibus ufque, quæque usque dulce redolebant: dum aerem tepentem frigiduli venti continuò mulcerent. Talem deniqe statum, qualis hac in concione contenditur, olim revera extitiffe, non folos inter Hebræos, aut Ægyptos, aut Græcos fides valuit; in idem consentientes Indos quoque habemus: quos apud Calanus Alexandrum magnum ita alloquens a Strabone inducitur.\* "Tritici hordeique olim erant, ficut nunc pulveris, omnia plena; fontes quoque, alii aquâ, lacte alii, alii melle, alii vino, nonnulli oleo fluebant: donec ob fatietatem luxuriamque homines in contumeliam sese tradiderunt. Statum igitur præsentem

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<sup>\*</sup>Το παλαιον παντ' ην αλφιτων και αλευρων πληρη, καθαπίς και νυν κονεως και κρηναι δ' ερρεον, αι μεν υδατος, γαλακτις δ' αλλαι, και ομοιως αι μεν μελιτος, αι δ' οινου, τινες δ' ελαιου υπο πληςμονης δ' οι ανθρωποι και τρυφης εις υδριν εξίν πεσον. Ζευς δε, μισησας την καταστασιν, ηφανισε παντιν και δια πονου τον βιον απεδειξε. Strab. lib. 15.

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Jupiter exosus, omnia abolevit; \* vitamque labore degendam instituit." Nemo, ut opinor, hæe legens, quo ex sonte manarint, diu dubitabit.

Scriptoribus istis, regionem natura plane eandem, situ loci utcunque diversam, designantibus, philosophum gravem et instar omnium Platonem jam tandem subjiciam. In dialogo ifto, cui titulus TIONITINOS adscribitur, quippe qui, procemium veluti, libris sequentibus Πολιτειας και νομων præponitur, de origine politiæ philosophus fuse disserit. Et, re altè repetità, hominem a deo creatum conditione primum beatissima et verè aurea potitum esse Ætatis aureæ et fælicis decriptionem pusor appellat; traditionem aliunde desumptam isto nomine designans: ne quis forsan pro figmento et somniis quasi φιλοσοφωντος narratio-Fidem ac authoritatem quam nem habeat. huic puro conciliatam vellet, hæc fua testantur

<sup>·</sup> Vid. Genef. Cap. 2 Com. 19.

verba.\* Ista nobis tradiderunt primi illi majorum nostrorum, qui primam mundi revolutionem proxime contingebant. Horum sermonum testes præconesque illi extiterunt." Platonicæ isti primævæ sælicitatis tabellæ, coloribus adeo vividis depictæ, haud abs re erit paulo diutius immorari: in qua si veritatem ipsam non deprehendamus, veritatis saltem vestigia nemo sere non agnoscet.† "Ætate istå, nihil erat ferum; neque aliæ alias animantes vorabant: aberat bellum penitus atque seditio.—Deus homines pascebat; ipse erat et pastor eorum et custos: ipsoque eos regente, civitatum con-

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<sup>\*</sup> Απεμνημονευετο δ΄ υπο των ημετεςων προγονών των πεωτώς, οι πελευτώση μεν τη προτεςα περιφορά τον εξης χρονον εγείτο νουν, της δε κατ' αρχας εφυοντο. τουτών γαρ ουτοι κηρυκες εγενονθ' ημιν των λογών. Plato Πολιτ:

<sup>†</sup> Τοτε ουκ αγειον ουδεν, ουτε αλληλών εδωδαι, πολεμος ουχ ενην, ουδε ςτασις τοπαραπάν. — Θεος ενεμεν αυτους, αυτος επιςτατών. —Νεμοντος δε εκεινου, πολιτειαι ουκ ησαν. —Καρπους δε αφθονους ειχον απο τε δρυών και πολλης υλης αλλης, ουχ υπο γεωργιας φυρμενους, αλλ' αυτοματης αναδιδούσης της γης. Plat. Politic. tom. 2. pag. 271. edit. Steph.

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stitutiones nullæ erarent. Fructus illis, et poma et fruges, arbores et fertile folum sponte fua fubministrabant." De Saturni regno alia plurima philosophus idem scribit; quæ statum paradifiacum quam verissime designant. Alia, ut ipse testatur, innumera, et illis longe mirabiliora, ab ejusdem rei quasi fonte permanant: longinquitate vero temporis, partim funt exoleta, partim dispersa atque dissipata perturbate dicuntur. Descriptioni illi uberrimæ si quid amplius deerit, quo Platonis sententia de hac re plenius enitesceret; Tyuars, sive wer quartes dialogi, pars ista, in quâ de hominum creatione agitur, argumenta huc spectantia amplissima præbet; ubi de mali causa et origine argute differitur. Ex involucris tandem, quibus veritas fere obruitur, hoc veri erui potest: homines benè, justè, et honestè vixisse contenditur, dum in semet impressam dei similitudinem puram atque intaminatam conservarent; malè vero, postquam cupiditatibus crassis et corporeis semet ipsos involvissent.

Ab

Ab hiltoricis et philosophis ad poetas defcendere, ac Homerum Elysios campos depingentem in primis audire, erit operæ pretium.

neum quam yer Wime defignant. Alia,

\* Vitæ hic humanæ ratio jucunda paratur;
Nec fera tempestas, nec nigri nubila cæli
Inficiunt æthram, tranquillà luce serenam:
Suaviter ast Zephyri spirantes arva salutant,
Et leviter stringunt recreata silentia ponti.

Quid de hortis Alcinoi dicam? nonne hi quoque ab eodem fonte derivantur? Terræ Phæaciæ descriptiones istæ conveniunt? Vana omnino fictaque cecinisse poetam grex totus criticorum negat. Quo vero pictura illa amceni, immo amcenitatis, horti referenda est? Non, ut iidem singunt, ad insulas Atlanticas; neque usquam regionum præter

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Τη πες επίςτη βιστη πελει ανθρωποισι,
Ου νιφετοί, ουτ ας χειμων πολυς, ουτε ποτ ομορος.
Αλλ' αιει ζεφυροιο λιγυπνειοντας αητας
Ωπεανος ανιησιν αναψυχειν ανθρωπους.

eam, ab hominibus primis enarratam, a primis scriptoribus depictam, præter Paradisum. Genus hominum primigenorum decantans, locum Homero proximum Hesiodus sibi vendicat; ejusdem, ut aliqui volunt, ut alii, ætatis prioris scriptor.

\*Tunc homines divûm vivebant more; neque illos
Anxia curarum moles, operumque labores
Lassabant: aberat morbus, tristisque Senectus.
Igneus ast ollis vigor; et dum corpore vires
Regnabant solido, convivia læta placebant.
Mors similis somno suit, atque uberrima tellus
Omnia liberius nullo cogente serebat
In commune bonum, nec quisquam invidit habenti.

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Nemo, ut opinor, scriptorum Christianorum statum Paradisiacum plenius et melius,

\* Ωστε θεοι δ΄ εζων, ακηδεα θυμον εχοντες
ΝοςΦιν ατερτε πονων και οίζυος αδε τι δειλον
Γηρας επην' αιει δε ποδας και χειρας ομοιοι
Τερποντ' εν θαλιησι, κακων εκτοςθεν απαντων.
Θνηςκον δ' ως υπνω δεδμημενοι' εσθλα δε παντα
Τοισιν εην' καρπον εφερε ζειδωρος αρουρα
Αυτοματη, πολλοντε, και αφθονον, &C.

depinixit,

depinxit, quám in istis versibus Hesiodus. Ætatem auream ab Ovidio in libro primo metamorphofium expressam, utpote omnibus notam, prætermitto. Neque de regno Saturnio tacet Virgilius.

motion of the feriode

Ante jovem nulli subigebant arva coloni: Nec fignare quidem, aut partiri limite campum " Fas erat; in medium quærebant: ipsaque tellus Omnia liberius, nullo poscente, ferebat.

desminative of the desire of desire or party Ad calcem libri proxime sequentis, scilicet 2di Georgicorum, hi yerfus idem quoque spectant.

Ante etiam sceptrum Dictæi regis, et ante Impia quam cæsis gens est epulata iuvencis; Aureus hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat.

En manifestam statûs Paradisiaci notam! quum homines nondum animalium carne sed solis terræ fructibus vescerentur. Sententiæ istæ variæ, ex scriptoribus antiquis excerptæ, suaviloquis hisce verbis Lucretianis jam tandem claudentur.

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lamque adeo affecta est ætas, affætaque tellus, Vix animalia parva creat, quæ cuncta creavit Sæcla, deditque ferarum ingentia corpora partu.

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Præterea nitidas fruges, vinetaque læta
Sponte suâ primum mortalibus ipsa creavit.
Ipsa dedit dulces sœtus, et pabula læta:
Quæ nunc vix nostro grandescunt aucta labore.

Statum hominum primigenium eo, quo nunc degitur, perfectiorem ipfe Epicuri discipulus plane agnoscit. Neque statum naturæ talem poeta iste agnovisset, nisi ut rem side dignissimam: rem universa traditione acceptam, gravissimorum hominum auctoritate sancitam. Narrationes igitur istas, quibus ipse Lucretius suffragatur, pro anili fabella ecquis ducet? Scriptorem illum, qui animum fabulis vanis arctifque religionis compagibus occupatum exfolvere pro viribus contendit, illum inquam credulitatis arguere, ecquis in animum inducat? De statu Paradisiaco quæ tot tantique scriptores protulerunt, alii pænè innumeri, si res postularet, et locus ferret, eadem

eadem suffragantes allegari possent. Quid. ista omnia de conditione hominum primigenià pro figmentis poeticis habenda putabimus? Nonne philosophos, nonne historicos, viros eruditos gravistimosque in eadem confentientes habemus? Singulos, si non vera, certe verisimilia proferentes? Singulas enim istas de regno saturni, ætate aurea, et similibus descriptiones, obumbratas quidem et variis erroribus implicitas, historiæ Mosaicæ veftigiis insistere atque insequi nullus dubito. Ab extremo fonte, nempe a primævis hominibus derivatas, verissimas ætatis primæ narrationes accepit Noa: easdemque, a Noz filiis traditas, posteros accepisse, haud minus constat.\*

Tertiò probandum restat, ut historiæ istæ de Statu Paradisiaco, a primis hominibus accepfir

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<sup>\*</sup> Primam hominis vitam cum fimplicitate fuisse, et nudo corpore, docebant et Ægyptii; unde aurea poetarum ætas, etiam Indis celebrata, ut apud Strabonem est. Grotius de ver Rel. Chr. lib. 1. Sect. 16.

tæ, scriptoribus tum sacris tum profanis confirmatæ, minimè futiles esse et ineptæ demonstrentur: immo e contra, rationi consentanea, naturâ humanâ digna, Deo optimo maximo dignissima esse hypothesis ista contenditur. Omne ens, ut loquuntur scholaftici, est perfectum: quo dogmate perfectio relativa, non absoluta, fignificatur. Quodcunque a sapientissimo Deo creatum est, id omnibus numeris abfolutum creari necesse est. Dum singulæ cujusque facultates atque organa inopiis fuis fubveniendis, fuis optatis potiundis apta et idonea, fœlicitati propriæ inferviant, ad fælicitatem propriam assequendam omnino sufficiant. Hoc experientia docet omnium, qui in studiis historiæ phyficæ verfantur: hoc, quaquaverfum lumina circumferamus, adeo constat; ut si Davidi liceat jure exclamare, 'O Domine, in sapientia omnia fecisti: haud injuria exclamationem alteram subjecit, terra, O Domine, plena est benevolentia tua. O infælicem humanæ naturæ sortem, O homines infortunatos! qui,

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qui, hujusce orbis dominatores constituti, in hoc orbe miseri soli deprehenduntur: qui tot animalium principes, uniuscujusque sua quatenus postulat natura perfecti, imperfecti foli effinguntur. Cuinam enim bono dux ista et jucundissima comes vitæ, ut vanè garriunt philosophi, ratio inservit: quapropter divina ista auræ particula nobis concessa est? Anne, ut perfectionis istius, istius virtutis apicem hominibus ostendat, quem natura humana nequit attingere; anne ob ea ut excruciet homines, quæ hominum natura effugere nequit, commissa; anne ut miseros homines reddat? Talia, O Domine, procul tibi absint confilia! actionum ergo humanarum moderatrix ista conceditur, ut actiones morales dirigat, ut appetitus cohibeat, ut vitam suavem atque jucundam reddat. Ei itaque assequendo fini aut sufficit ratio, aut non. Si non, impar est fini instituto; ac homines, quibus hujusce finis gratia ratio conceditur, eatenus sunt imperfecti: Omne vero ens e manibus creatoris perfectum evasit. Fini igitur proposito

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posito sufficit ratio: nunc autem temporis rationem in sinem istam haud quaquam sufficere experientia quotidiana testatur; ergo olim se rem ita habuisse necesse est. Atque ex his ratiociniis sequitur, talem suisse primævum naturæ humanæ statum, qualem a primis scriptoribus expressum accepimus.

Quantum miseriarum vitam hominum obsidet, neminem latet; ac prævidentia ipsa miseriarum quæ eludi nequeunt, quas neque prudentia effugere, neque ipfa virtus repellere valet, miserias graviores reddit. Ferarum vita in malis versatur; illas vero nec præteriti recordatio, neque timor futuri excruciatas tenet; natura illis largita est jucunda oblivia vitæ. Ast morbi, dolores, mors, et pallida malorum cohors, non modo hominum vestigia comites certissimi infequuntur, oculis autem continuo obversantur, et mentibus quasi inhærent. Et si partem alteram vitæ humanæ contempleris, certa homines ne minima quidem voluptas manet. Hoccine

Hoccine vero creatoris benevolentis, hoccine est Dei optimi maximi; ut animantes crearet, quas magna et plurima necessario premunt mala; quarum vitas voluptates parvulæ tantum, breves, et fortuitæ mulcent?

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Quid, nonne hominis vita, affectibus cum ratione bellum civile gerentibus, certamine perpetuo versatur? Meliora laudare atque probare, deteriora sequi, humanum est. Spes, Timor, Ira, Grex totus affectuum araeg giar ciens, vicissim dominatur; dum ratio, gubernatrix veluti timida et pufilla, fervis istis rebellibus politiam hominis internam administrandam tradit. Facultatum illam humanarum dominam et reginam, quid verum est atque decens, monentem homines male adversantur: iis, prava jubentibus, aures faciles præbent; quodcunque mali confulunt, obtemperare heu nimis parati! Hebescente denique et quasi defatigato appetitu, torva aspici redit ratio; delictique eos tunc serò pudet, piget, pœnitetque. Quid multis? peccare

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Peccare, et pœnitere, atque iterum peccare, vitam humanam misera vicissitudine distinguit. Picturæ vero humani generis isti imaginem alteram et longè diversam conferre liceat : hominis imaginem, innocentiæ et fœlicitatis compotem. Corporis atque animi vires puta aptè amiceque conspirantes: mentem scientia omnigena instructam; arbitrium voluntati Dei inserviens; appetitus congrua et consentanea quærentes, affectus denique summissos et rationi obtemperantes: facultatibus humanis ita ordinatis (et facultates rectè ordinari quid vetat?) Harmonia Platonica inde sequitur, hinc Moseos Status Paradifiacus: hinc ætas aurea poetarum.

Perfectionis istius apicem, in qua homines primitus creari demonstrat râtio, ipsorumque conditionem, quam experientia hodierna probat, qui perpenderunt philosophi, tantæ metamorphoseos causas hinc et inde quæsiverunt. Mutationem ipsam nemo fere dubitavit, causa usque latebat. Nodum istum re-

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folvere, nodum herclè Deo vindice dignum, veritatis fons et principium Deus ipse dignatus est: Nubesque inter et tenebras, que obvolvunt eum, æquitatem et justitiam solo eins insidere, demonstravit. Et ecquis adeo iniquus est rerum æstimator, qui æconomiæ divinæ explicationem talem nullius ponderis aut usus leviusculi pendit? At nihilne interest ut de Deo et nobis ipsis recte sentiamus? At nihilne interest, ut nobis innotescat, quam ob culpam in hunc mundum, veluti in carcerem Deus homines relegavit : Miseriis innumeris obsitos, fœlicitatis veræ vix umbris relevatos? Hæc denique nescientibus, fœlicitatem eorum futuram ecquæ argumenta nobis compertam facient? Si hic miser sim, et id unde fiat, nescio; quo me sciam non posthac quoque miserum futurum? Dubitationes istas curasque sollicitas, quibus tenetur quisque cui sua fœlicitas cordi est, Deus jam benignè diffipavit; et formidinis loco spes novas suppeditavit. Verbum Dei, in quo reteguntur arcana, mundi ab origine prima caliginosi erroris

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## ERRATA.

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204. for Conditione prima, read—Conditione, prima

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214. for wedeutwon read Tedeutwon

219. for affætag; read effætag;

FINIS.

concito ut. 100 er's milylis-abrolates, in one fold files, and Edg vertes deprengacions, animo is-A grafogve angledi nofirma eft. Hoe termin, tiers cores trois depromets ches the Court of the content of the content in Logina that he for the man they interest . -confinite a cope but with the old colored The same of a simple non bony remains division of a miner